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THE
FACE OF THE WORLD

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THE FACE OF THE WORLD

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I

It was the day on which the medical students had heard the result of their examination, and there was a hum of eager voices on the steps of the University and along Carl Johan Street in Christiania. Even those who were disappointed felt a peculiar desire to shout "Hurrah," because, if for no other reason, they could now put away their books.

"It's no good working hard, either, for you get no further," said Harold Mark, as he put his arm within that of his friend Wilse, and the two sauntered up the Palace Hill.

"Ah, I suppose you feel that you ought to have got something better than a first class," said Wilse as they stopped before a bench and sat down.

"No, but it's so funny to think that we must

now go about and pretend we know all about it. How absurd it is, to be sure! I feel as I sit here that I must be only half awake, and want to rub my eyes. But tell me seriously—have I really been asleep until now?”

“You asleep? Was that what you said?”

Harold Mark was fair and pale, but the features of his clean-shaven face were regular and full of vivacity, and the laughing gray eyes had a mischievous expression. Those eyes had more than once during lectures sent little flashes up from his paper with the question, “Is that all?” And once when the professor of surgery had gathered his students round the operating-table, and was swinging his scissors and boasting of his own achievements, Harold electrified the others by saying: “Yes, but I thought Hippocrates too knew all about that.”

Harold’s mother was a widow, living in a little west-country town, where she had started a school. She kept him well supplied with pocket-money, which he often spent with a bad conscience; for her letters, which were al-

ways gentle and kind, were so serious, and *he* always wanted to take the whole world as a joke. He worked by fits and starts, and took difficulties like a kind of boxing; and then he would idle for a time, quite certain that, even then, the others would not easily catch up with him. He dressed well, was a prize ski-racer, played the violin, and would, when his allowance admitted of it, hire a horse and spend half the day riding about the surrounding country.

He loved Nature, and looked at her with the pleasure that others might have in listening to music. He felt in himself the undulation of the hills, drank in the fragrance of the earth and foliage, and the light from sky and fjord. Then, when he came home, refreshed and light-hearted, he would lie back in his rocking-chair with the feeling that it was good to be alive.

Yet, always there was something tapping at the window of his heart, and that was the thought of his mother. She had had a hard struggle to make her school a success, she

being such a radical, and the little town so conservative. Her letters often breathed despondency over the very little she managed to do, and he knew that she was patiently waiting for him to come and help her.

He was soon to see her face to face now, for, in a few days, he would be sitting in her little cottage, and perhaps then there would be other things besides his degree that her eyes would ask about.

"You look rather down in the mouth," said Wilse. "Is it true that you've been offered the post of demonstrator at the University?"

"Well, what if I have?" replied Harold, pushing his gray felt hat back from his forehead, and whistling up into the yellow leafage.

"Oh, of course you think such an offer's nothing for one who's just out of the egg."

"But, my dear fellow, how can I begin to teach young fellows something that I don't know myself? Do you think I'm a gramophone that will just stand and give out what other people have howled into me?"

"What about the rest of us then? Besides you must get to work at something!"

"Of course I must try to get away and really learn something."

"To Germany?"

"Perhaps, or up in the country, if possible to some out-of-the-way place."

Wilsé started. "You in some out-of-the-way place!"

"Why, do you think it does one any harm to be by one's self for a time?"

"But to learn medicine?"

"Well, everything has to be looked at in connection with something greater. Did it never strike you as humorous that we insist upon doctoring people, but if the poor devils ask whether it's worth their while to get well again—why, then we're at a loss for an answer?"

"How confoundedly serious you are today!"

"Perhaps I am," half admitted Harold with a little embarrassed laugh, as he rose and pulled his hat forward.

"Well, well," he continued, "we shall meet at the dinner this evening. Don't forget to

bring your sister!" And with his gray hat a little on one side, the sturdy young man hurried away up the hill under the yellow trees.

.

It caused a sensation when, later in the autumn, Harold accepted an appointment as district-physician in the far north of Finmark. His fellow-students gazed at one another. Could this devil-may-care fellow, who was in his element on the asphalt and in the ball-room, be going to turn himself into an Eskimo? When they heard from him later, it was all about journeys in a reindeer-sledge over snow-fields, of nights in Finn tents, or in a sleeping-bag with the snow burying him while he slept, or of a voyage in an open boat and stormy weather out into the Arctic Ocean to see a Finn-Lapp fisherman who wanted something strong to take before he died. Harold wrote of it as if it were all fun and he enjoyed it.

A couple of years later the newspapers reported that he had rallied the fishermen in a conflict with the traders up there. His friends

were puzzled. Surely he was not thinking of getting into parliament?

When he had been in the north five years, the papers announced that Harold Mark had gained a scholarship to enable him to study abroad; and one fine autumn day he was seen in Carl Johan Street with a timid little wife on his arm.

"But you never said a word about being married!" said Wilse, who was now at the State Hospital.

"Come along to the Mirror Saloon and have dinner with us," replied Harold, and the other consented.

Harold Mark seemed to have grown bigger and stouter, and he swayed from side to side as he walked. His fair beard made him look older, and his once so alert eyes had acquired a far-seeing expression that reminded one of auroras and snow-fields.

"Let us find a good place!" he suggested when they had entered the dining-room. "Oh dear!" he went on, "I see I've turned into a Finn! I've brought my hat in with me!" He

threw it upon a chair and rubbed his hands together, his face glowing with delight at being among his own people again.

"Thora!" he said. "This is the place where the élite of Christiania exhibit themselves when the theatres are over, so you must eat with awe and reverence." He ordered an abundance of wine, and when he raised his glass of the white liquid with head thrown back to drink, he resembled a pleasure-loving sea-captain who had at last reached a gay town. "Your health!" he said, "and to memories of old times!"

His young wife was the daughter of a light-house-keeper he had known in the north. She was a brunette, with small, regular features. Her throat was long and beautiful, and when her brown eyes found courage to look at you, she reminded you of those young mothers that Raphael loved to paint.

"She imagines she possesses talent and can learn to handle a brush," said her husband, stroking his beard; "and that's why she's dragging me to London and Paris, for nothing else would satisfy her. It's a way these sea-birds

out of the polar night have. They've sat still and dreamed so long that there's no managing them at all."

"You surely don't mean to say that you're going abroad for my sake?" she ventured to ask anxiously.

"Don't worry yourself, my dear! Wilse knows me. I say, Peter, there's something that Ellen Key calls the art of living. Do you know anything about it?"

"No. But you constituted yourself a leader of the people up there. That was very philanthropic of you."

"Shut up and don't say a word about philanthropy! There are things that can irritate one and make you so angry that at last you can't contain yourself, but must go for the low cads. The art of living! I've been pondering over that expression. Here am I, for instance, sitting among clean people and eating with a silver fork at a table with a white cloth, and yet—well, I can't quite manage to feel only joy and gladness over it all, for half my inner pon-

sciousness is with the thousands that at this moment haven't even salt for their soup."

"Haven't you had enough of your arctic Lapps yet?"

"Indeed yes! But when you're up there, sharing both their vermin and their rags, you're dreaming all the time of this—of roses and champagne and slow, swaying waltz music. Your consciousness is in one place, and you yourself in quite another. And a fellow like that, with so little knowledge of himself, goes doctoring other folk! The art of living! That's a good expression! Waiter! Another bottle, please."

The day following, Mark's friends met on the quay to wish the couple a pleasant journey. Harold had turned up the collar of his gray overcoat, and kept his wife close to him all the time. He seemed to fear she might lose herself altogether if she moved a step from his side. He was going to England to watch the masters of surgery for about a year, he said, and then to Paris to the Pasteur Institute. "But it's not certain," he added with a smile,

“that in the long run I shall be able to carry such an amount of wisdom. Good-bye! Good-bye!”

.

On a September day in the following year, Harold was walking with his wife along the Boulevard de Mont-Parnasse. Once or twice, raising his black felt hat, he stopped to ask a passer-by the way to the Café de Versailles.

That year an unusually large colony of Scandinavians had begun to gather in Paris, and their rendezvous was the Café de Versailles, where Scandinavian newspapers were to be found. In the long, narrow room on the right, that ended in the billiard-saloon, well-known Scandinavian artists might be seen as the evening advanced, sitting at the card-tables with their glasses beside them, or absorbed in the home newspaper, or shouting with laughter at some good story. The gas-jets burned dim in the dense atmosphere; there was a buzzing of all kinds of languages, and the click of billiard-balls came continually from the room beyond. Now and then a stranger would come

in past the two rows of tables; but the look he received from every one told him that he was an intruder, and, as a rule, he would feel that the best thing he could do was to go out again.

Harold Mark and his wife, however, were soon quite at home here. She was pretty and unassuming, and he was lively and had a thousand things to talk about. "Ah, here comes the doctor!" came from the tables as he entered the café whistling, with his black felt hat on one side; and a few women followed him with their eyes in the mirrors on the wall as he passed. He would sit down at a table, order a glass of black beer, and, blowing the foam off it, would begin at once, with merry eyes and laughter, some amusing story.

It occasionally happened that some one would come in with a grave face, and ask at haphazard for the doctor.

"He's just gone into the billiard-room."

"Do you think he'll come with me? My wife's been taken so ill."

"You'd better go in and ask him."

Harold always went when he was wanted,

and although it was difficult enough for him to manage on his small scholarship, especially as it had to do for two, he could never be induced to accept a fee. "Nonsense!" he would say with a wave of his hand, putting on his hat as he moved towards the door. "Hope you'll soon be better! By the bye, have you got such a thing as a match here?" When he had lighted his cigarette, he looked back once more with a smile as he shut the door, and then ran down the stairs humming.

He had been a year in England, but it was Paris that really opened his eyes. He saw a city unfold itself, not only as a collection of houses, parks and monuments, but as a poem on earth. The Pasteur Institute was here too, and in its two heads, Roux and Metschnikoff, he at last found teachers whom he felt no desire to tease. In the laboratories there, it was as though the very future of mankind were being prepared. He was in them each day: here was something for him to do.

Then there were the art galleries. It was Paris that brought him really to feel the deep,

mysterious emotion produced by the contemplation of a masterpiece. He walked with his wife through the Louvre with wide, observant eyes, intoxicated by the wealth of light and color that met him everywhere. "Thora! Come here!" "No, Harold! You must come here!" They often kept together, and would stand before some picture in a reverence too deep for words, and would finally clasp hands with a smile.

It was here too that Harold experienced the hitherto unknown enjoyment of getting into a quiet corner and becoming absorbed in the great world's press. He only needed to turn to the left instead of the right in the Café de Versailles, and he was at once miles away from his countrymen. "Where's the doctor this evening?" some one would ask. "Oh, he's buried in his newspapers on the other side." "Ah, then it'll be no use speaking to him," was the general remark, accompanied by a shake of the head.

It was while reading the world's newspapers here that Harold really began to form an idea

of life in the world. This at last was something more than school geography. It is rather irritating to be going about on a little planet, and not even knowing what is happening on it. What do we know about Rumania? It is a word, a school lesson, but what is Rumania? There is so much floating in one's mind in a half-light, a half-mist. There must be an end of this.

It was a strange journey, swift as thought, whenever new horizons opened, and limitless expanses disclosed themselves. This was not history, but only an immense moment, the gigantic Now, that swept into his mind from all sides. New York became a living thing, and the next instant it was Melbourne, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, London. The immensity of this life flared up within him in great gleams and quickened his pulses, filling him with a strange feverishness. At first he would sit and let his fancy take up all this material simply out of curiosity, like a globe-trotter who wants to see everything. Outside in the street he could hear the roar of the city, the

rumble of the trains passing in and out of the Mont-Parnasse station, and of omnibuses full of people, often running on only one wheel round the corner into the Rue de Rennes. And in the world's newspapers there rose the same subdued roar from telegrams and articles, but this was the long, heavy waves rolling in from the immense ocean of humanity. Then came a day when he became more than curious. Things here and there in the various countries began to be of great moment to him. His mother's eyes seemed to rest on him and ask him what he thought of it. A strike in Valparaiso, an attempted rising in Barcelona, an arrest in Moscow, a massacre of Christians in Mesopotamia, the tyranny of the trusts in America—these were things that carried him away and made his hands tremble. The world became more than cities and scenery and life and tumult; it began to reveal its spiritual features to him. What did he think of that—and that—and that? He who at home had never been able to attach himself to any of those moribund political parties, now took a side;

he sat here overwhelmed by the immense view of the world, in which nearly everything was in the wrong place. There were things that grieved him, though they took place at such an infinite distance. There were things that filled him with rage, although they happened in another continent. What did he think of that, and that? And every time he returned to his quiet newspaper corner, it was as if he were preparing himself, not only for great visions and emotions, but for a combat. While he sat there he made, in distant lands, friends whom he would never meet, and bitter enemies whom he had never chanced upon. A minister in Hungary, a senator in America, a general in Germany—he saw them alive! The world not only grew larger every time, but it became a power that drew him more and more out to itself, with his interests, his thoughts, and his dreams. He seemed to be always growing more wide-awake, and the more wide-awake he grew, the more things did he meet with that vexed and depressed him. He began so to enter into and sympathise with everything that

went on in other countries, that, at last, it was not only his thoughts that darted hither and thither, but it was the very fibres of his heart that branched out all over the world.

When he arose and started for home, everything that was close to him had shrunk, even the Pasteur Institute, even the fact of his being a doctor; and when he reached home and looked at his wife, she had grown indistinct; he saw her indeed, but saw many other things at the same time.

"Where have you been today, my dear?" he would ask.

"At the Louvre, of course."

Thora Mark no longer clung nervously to her husband's arm. She had of late begun to venture out by herself, and wandered about the Louvre alone when he could not go with her. She read about art, she saw art, she dreamed about art. She would return, after hours spent in the galleries, not exhausted, but mentally refreshed and joyful over the great and glorious events of the day. Her timidity had gradually been shaken off. It seemed as

if she had at last found, in the galleries, the element in which her being could develop. Happiness gained courage to appear in her face. She no longer dropped her eyes when any one looked at her, but drew herself up with a look of self-confidence. She had grown prettier, and her laugh rang out more readily, because the world had at last opened in all its splendor before her gaze. To the Louvre, still more to the Louvre! It was as though she had thrown herself into this flood of color, lines and light that had swept in from all ages and lands. To the Louvre! Still more to the Louvre! When she left it, she felt as if she could fly. At a festive gathering in the studio of a Danish sculptor, she astonished every one by moving into the middle of the room with a light scarf, and dancing with such fire, fantasy and grace, that they all stood round and gazed.

"Where did you learn that, Thora?" asked her husband, drawing her aside when she had finished.

"Learn it?" she queried. "Didn't you see

it was Botticelli, stupid? Why, you might have seen it was his lines and rhythm!"

'After this they were more popular than ever. He improvised on his violin, and she danced to it. Where had she learned to dance? In the Louvre, she said. Then she would take her mandolin, in congenial company, and sit down on the floor and sing gay songs with so solemn a face that her hearers almost fell off their chairs with laughter. Yes, they were two young people whom every one was glad to meet. Thora had really intended to begin work at the art-school, but was prevented because the boarding-house became too expensive for them. But it is possible to live in rooms too, and there one may cook nice things on a spirit stove. You save on that, especially when the wife is willing to do everything herself, even to the washing of her husband's linen.

So the Marks rented a couple of rooms, with a cupboard for a kitchen, in a little square high up near Montrouge, and these they were going to furnish themselves.

"Have you any furniture?" he asked when they stood in the flat after taking it.

"No. Have you?"

"No."

"Have we any money?" the wife asked, looking at him with a roguish smile. He mechanically put his finger into his waistcoat pocket.

"Money? For furniture? Where could I have got it from?"

Then they both burst out laughing, and sitting down on the floor agreed that at any rate they lived there now; after which they went out and managed to get together the things that were absolutely necessary. In Paris you can furnish a house for a few francs. You put an old mattress against a wall and throw a shawl over it, and you have a splendid sofa, which, moreover, at night, is a bed. A couple of glasses, knives and a sauce-pan cost a few sous, and on the wall they fastened with drawing-pins two or three photographs, and then stood and admired the effect. "It'll be splendid!" he said, putting his arm round her waist. "Well, I never thought it would be so easy

to start housekeeping!" she said, bending back her head so that he could kiss her.

They still managed to meet their friends, here as much as anywhere, for at any rate there was room to sit on the floor. "Come fed, but not drunk!" was the invitation. The entertainment consisted of songs, stories, dancing, a glass of tea with rum, and cigarettes; and this was enough to make the guests forget to go, so that it was not until the small hours of the morning that they stumbled down the stairs.

Long after they were gone and Thora was in bed, Harold still stood at the window, looking out. What was he thinking about, and why did he stand there?

II

THE little lamp-shade of green cardboard had the effect of confining the light to the writing-table where Harold's fair head was bent over a book, while Thora sat in the shadow, darning his socks. Silence had reigned for so long that the squeaking of the mice in the old brick walls was audible, while from without came the distant, muffled roar of the great city.

"What are you laughing at?" said Harold, raising his head to look at her, but at first not able to see her in the gloom.

"I'm certain it's not medicine you're reading now, Harold."

"Is there anything very funny in my not reading medicine?"

"You've no idea how often your expression changes when you're sitting like that and taking part in revolutions and cutting down enemies and improving the whole world! Ha, ha, ha! I can't help laughing."

He rose and went to the other side of the room to fill his pipe.

"When you're reading your own science," Thora went on, "you're really so good-looking. You look as if you were standing upon a mountain, looking out over a country that you're going to march into."

"You should write poetry, Thora. You've got imagination."

"And you ought to read less of that rubbish, and then you wouldn't be in such low spirits."

"I'm reading Alexander Herzen's 'From the Other Bank of the River.' It's perhaps the mine that one of these days will blow up the tyrannical power of the whole of Europe. Do you call that rubbish?"

She sighed and looked at the lamp. They so often sat here now, just these two alone, and yet they seemed to have less and less to say to one another. He no longer asked her to go out with him, and she had to go to the galleries alone now. They often seemed to be looking at one another across an empty space that grew ever wider and wider.

"You women are strange," he said, when he had finished filling his pipe.

Her head came suddenly forward into the lamplight. "What? What did you say about us women?"

"Well, you're contented with such an awfully little bit of the world. That's all." He lighted his pipe, and the flame of the match flickered over his face.

"And I can't conceive why it should be necessary for a doctor to rummage about in all that," she said, beginning to darn again with rapid stitches.

"Oh! You can't conceive that? Of course not! Nowadays a doctor ought to bury himself in some special subject, such as nose and throat, and be blind to everything else in the world. Then you'd be satisfied. But I can assure you I'd just as soon become a hatter. I want to know what's going on around me. I want to take part in what the world's doing, or I can't have any idea about the people either. Do you understand that, my dear?" He took

two or three turns up and down the room, and his step grew quicker.

“But does nothing happen in the world but what is wrong?” she asked, her needle still moving rapidly.

He took his pipe out of his mouth and stood still looking at the lamp. For it was true. He himself felt as if the more he enlarged his horizon, the darker did the pictures that he saw become. The bright scenes of his youth seemed to be growing dim. They were only shadow-feelings that were now called forth in him—indignation, anger, desire to attack. He remembered almost nothing of Finmark except the thralldom of the fishermen to the traders, nothing of England except the dreadful slums in London. It came more and more to be the newspapers that determined his state of mind, and the newspapers were full of cries for help from all over the world. They beat in upon him, took possession of his thoughts, and were beginning to disturb his sleep; and if he tried to shake it all off in a night of revelry, he would

stand by the window afterwards, as if looking for something he had abandoned.

"It's not my fault, Thora, that most things in the world are as they are," he said at last, going back to his seat at the table.

"But will they be any better because you mix yourself up in them?"

There was a pause, and she heard him breathing heavily. "No!" he said at last, quite softly. "That's what's so dreadful—to be so powerless."

An hour later she rose, saying, as she clasped her hands above her head and stretched herself, "Well, I suppose you'll be sitting up late again tonight?"

"Oh, dear, no! I'm coming in a few minutes," he said, looking up from his book with a smile as she left the room.

They had bought two iron bedsteads cheap, and these now stood in the next room. When he heard that all was quiet in there, he raised his head, threw himself back in his chair, and sat with his gaze fixed on the window.

At last all was still around him. He could

hear the wick burning in the lamp. Outside rose the distant murmur of the city as before, this city that never slept; and behind that, still farther off, a different murmur as of breakers rising and falling. What was it? Was it only the things he was thinking about? There came a wave. It was the little Boer nation that had just risen against mighty England. Money and blood, money and blood! Another wave, and this time it was the Armenians with mutilated bodies and the flash of the Turkish executioners' swords; Russian martyrs in Siberia; half-naked Italian laborers, living on bread and water, and unable to read—wave upon wave, life on the earth, rolling by. He began to see it all as under moonlight. He saw spiritual leaders come forward, unreal and yet transfigured, because most of them were dead. When he shut his eyes he saw it all still better, so it was nothing outside, but a part of his own mind. It was a world that had formed itself out of what he had read, world-pictures drawn with the newspapers' ink. These pictures had gradually become like living beings; they had

made him more and more their slave, and must be supplied with good food several times a day. Was this to go on? And if so, where would it end?

When he slept he had a cold feeling that they were by his bedside, and the moment he opened his eyes they were upon him. Today it was the Spanish popular leader who was to be shot, he remembered; and before he had his own breakfast he had to go down to the street to get a paper with the foreign telegrams, for the monster in his mind must be fed at once. Was there nothing but this in the world then? Could he not turn back? Thora was right, and yet—no, he could not tear himself away from the age in which he lived; he must keep up with everything, everything!

Would he become greater by embracing so wide a horizon? Over his work, in any case, the day would continually grow broader; and even if he walked alone, the number of his companions would be always increasing. Even if he pulled down the blinds in his room, a thousand eyes would still stare in. When he

opened his eyes he saw much; when he shut them he saw more.

Harold Mark bent forward and supported his head upon his hands. From without came continually the murmur from the sleepless city, and beyond it, louder, more distant, the other, the great world which at the same time was himself.

.

As the warm May days passed, the frequenters of the Café de Versailles saw less and less of the doctor and his wife, and finally Thora ceased to appear at all. If any one went to their rooms, Thora was always at home; but it was evident that something was wrong. In the first place it was that she had no suitable summer dress in which she thought she could appear in warm weather, and for the present there was no way of getting a new one. In the second place they were both in a state of great suspense, for, in the course of the next few days, it would be decided whether Harold was to hold the scholarship for another year. It was not usual for the same man to receive it

for three years—but they had hopes. Friends had been at work, and the directors at the Institute had given him a recommendation that carried weight; but they both felt as if it would be an actual catastrophe should they be forced to leave Paris at the moment. Harold needed another year if he was really to make anything out of his studies; and Thora—well, she hoped that at any rate next winter she could begin at the art-school. They might hear any day. The suspense was so great that they could not sleep. Early and late they talked of all the wonderful things that might happen to them if they could only stay on another year. They talked about it until they could not bear to mention it any more. When the door-bell rang they both started. It might be a telegram! When the postman came up the stairs, he was fate personified. What had he brought? They had been a little careless with their money of late, so that for a fortnight they had been obliged to dine off stewed beans and water, with now and then a pig's trotter for a couple of sous, just to get a taste of something salt. But what

did that matter? They would willingly live like that all next winter, if only they might be here in Paris. Every day Thora dreaded Harold's coming home from the Institute, for as soon as the door opened she saw the anxious, questioning look in his eyes: Has any word come?

At last one day when she was standing washing in her little kitchen, the door-bell rang, and on opening the door she found it was a telegraph-boy. She tore the telegram open without waiting to dry her hands properly. It was from home. It was the scholarship!

A heat-wave was passing over Paris at this time, and the city was shrouded in a stifling, dust-laden atmosphere. Outside the little cafés on Mont-Parnasse, their landlords, in shirt-sleeves, were watering the heated asphalt, and perspiring men were sitting under the awnings with their hats pushed back, drinking iced water through straws. The scent of Paris itself filled the air, the scent of old houses, of dust, asphalt, petrol, fruit, vegetables and butchers' shops, together with a refreshing

whiff from the numerous gardens and parks throughout the great city.

Later in the afternoon Thora was standing in the little sitting-room before the large, cracked mirror that, after the French manner, was let into the wall over the fireplace. She smiled at her own image in it. She wore a light muslin dress with purple flowers, a black patent leather belt round her waist, brown stockings, and brown shoes with straps across the instep, everything being new. She had just come from the Bon Marché, where she had only meant to look at a few materials for quite an inexpensive dress, and then—then she had met a friend from whom she could quite well borrow, and before she realised it she was entirely reclothed. Never mind! They were prosperous now, and they were going to be in Paris next year too, so why should she not enjoy herself a little? She proceeded to put a light-colored straw hat over her dark hair, the wide brim being tied down over her ears in coquettish imitation of the peasant women of Brittany. Putting her hands on her hips she

took a step backwards and surveyed her youthful, slim figure from top to toe, and then went through a few dancing-steps while she tried at the same time to follow her image in the mirror. What would Harold say when he came. "Good gracious me! Is that you, or is it not you?" And then he would guess what had happened, and would take her in his arms and lift her off her feet, and be simply wild with delight. He must be here very soon now.

This time of painful suspense had brought them together again. Each no longer went his and her own way, but talked together and looked at one another like two who are mirrored in one another's thoughts. And now it would be wonderful to be together when this great piece of good fortune made everything bright and beautiful for them; so today they would make merry; it should be like a second wedding-day. On her way home she had pawned her little gold watch so as to be able to get a good dinner for them both, and had bought cutlets, fruit, vegetables and oysters, and a bottle of sparkling burgundy, which,

with a little imagination, might be drunk as champagne. He would soon be here, but of course she could not sit down and wait; she must hasten to meet him.

She took her sunshade, and, drawing on her white mittens, ran down the stairs. Out in the scorching heat, however, she almost gasped for breath, and hastened into the shade of the trees across the square, stopping a moment at the Avenue du Maine to let a tram pass, and then turning in between the rows of low, begrimed houses that stretch westwards towards the Pasteur Institute.

It was a district full of second-hand goods shops, old clothes shops, workshops, smithies, and warehouses belonging to city merchants. Dirty women sat in the street, roasting chestnuts, and little children with dark, curly hair crawled about in the gutter and enjoyed themselves. The young woman in the light dress looked at all this with a strange smile; no one heard that she was singing to herself, but all the time a flood of light filled her soul. Would

he not soon come? She looked eagerly up every street she turned into.

At last!

His straw hat was on one side, and he carried a big book under one arm, while he swung the other vigorously, and turned out his toes. "Will he soon see me?" she said to herself, and pretended to take no notice. Yes, he stopped short, stood still and positively stared, while she came on towards him as if she expected anything rather than him.

"Why, good gracious!" he said, just as she had thought he would, and then there was nothing for her to do but stop and discover him.

"Oh, is that you, Harold?" she said, looking up innocently.

"Is it me? Upon my word I think it's even more remarkable that that's you!"

"Why?" she asked innocently. "Is it the first time I've come to meet you? Or are you disappointed because it isn't some one else?"

"I say, Thora, have you been committing a robbery? You haven't had that dress on before, have you?"

She could not keep it up any longer. She took his arm and drew him along.

"Can't you guess what it means, you old silly?"

"The telegram?"

She nodded.

He caught his breath and stopped to wipe his forehead. A weight had been suddenly lifted from his shoulders, but he had not the strength to stand erect at once.

"Aren't you glad then?" she said, trying to draw him along.

"Yes—oh yes! But wait a moment! Yes, now—now I can go on again."

They went on arm in arm. He laughed as he looked about him, and seemed to rub his eyes to make quite sure that he was not dreaming. "You were quite right to make yourself a little smart, Thora. I hope you took every penny there was to spend on your finery, for we can borrow from somebody or other until we get it from home. How pretty you are, dear! If we weren't in the street I would take you in my arms and kiss you!"

They walked quickly and no longer noticed the heat. Somehow they felt their happiness would only really begin when they were alone together. On the third floor of their house Mark put the key into its hole, and she flew in before him.

"What do you think of this?" was the question in her eyes, and at last he discovered on the writing-table two large brass candlesticks in the shape of Doric columns. He took them up. They were heavy and seemed like something unreal on the simple table.

"I say, Thora, you must be quite mad. Where did you get hold of these?"

"At a bric-à-brac dealer's up the street. How do you like them? Fancy, they cost almost nothing."

But still he did not take her in his arms and lift her off her feet. He put the candlesticks down, and sank back on to the sofa, every now and then passing his handkerchief across his forehead, and still drawing deep breaths. The suspense had lasted such a long time.

"Well, I congratulate you!" she said, kissing

him on the forehead; then, hurrying into the kitchen, she put on her big overall, and set about preparing their meal. There was a lump in her throat, but she comforted herself with the thought that, at the festive meal, she would get everything that she had expected.

III

FOR some time Harold sat gazing straight before him. Then he turned his glance from one thing to another in the little room, as if he could not quite make out where he was. He rose and began to walk up and down, gradually working himself into a state of strange excitement. What was the matter? He had now got what he had latterly been looking forward to as the saving of his whole future. The great, joyful moment when the means for yet another year's stay in Paris dropped, as it were, into his hand, was not to be tomorrow. It was today; it was now. He ought to be radiant with happiness, not at some future time, but now. It made him so irresolute. If only he could have said: Next week! If only it had been an injustice somewhere or other in the world that he could have been angry about; but it was happiness! And it was now! It was as though abilities within him, which had

grown rusty from disuse, were called into play. He looked about for some way of escape.

Once he had thought the possession of this woman would be perfect bliss; but when once she was his, the matter was settled and done with, and if any one said to him: "What a lovely wife you have!" it had almost the effect of a reproach. Perhaps people thought he ought to go about from morning till night beaming over Thora; but there are other things for a man to do in this world.

"So they didn't dare do otherwise than give me the scholarship again this year, in spite of everything!" he thought. There was a little bitter taste in it when he put it this way, and he immediately felt more at his ease; but a little while afterwards he sat down, and passing his hands over his knees, looked miserably round the room. "What has come over me?" he thought. "Am I quite incapable of feeling pleasure? And what is the reason of it?"

He bowed his head, and drew a breath that was like a sigh.

His mother had been the invisible power

which, gently and kindly, even from a distance, had educated his feelings. Hers was a warm nature, but her warmth had never glowed or flamed. It was sympathy with those that suffered, and hatred of those that made them suffer.

It was the same, too, with the intellectual guides that he had been accustomed to follow in his youth. They inculcated hatred of tyrants, and compassion for the weak; these were great, heavy shadow-feelings. Their faith was in something remote and unreal, which they called the future. As for the present, it was something evil. It was everything that required extermination or readjustment. And if, nevertheless, one happened—as he had himself done in his student days—to break away and sacrifice to the sun and the woman of today, amid all the gaiety there was the consciousness of a canker ever gnawing at one's heart.

The strange thing was that, out here in the great world, he had found, without thinking much about it, the same spirit in the world's

press. It cultivated misfortunes, it fed mankind with catastrophes, and thus was deeply rooted in the necessity both of those that gave and of those that received, in any case of the present type of man.

“And I myself,” thought Harold, “am sitting here buried up to my chin by the same forces, and not knowing whether I can break away from them or not.”

“Tra la la la!” sang Thora, busy in her kitchen. She would soon come in with the dinner, and her eyes would be fixed on him in expectation of a reflection of her own joy.

Harold rose, and, opening the French window, went out on to the little iron balcony and sat down. It was so high up, and he could look out over the interminable city with its sea of buildings now bathed in a purple twilight. Before him and to the left he saw the line of the Arc de Triomphe, and over it a yellow-flaming sky. Farther to the left, the long, golden arches of the Pont Alexandre spanned the river, which faded away, like a stream of liquid fire, far, far off on the horizon.

In the little square below, some gipsies had put up a row of tents for a menagerie and a merry-go-round. The automatic orchestra was already braying out its brazen tones, the lions were roaring in their cages, and the galloping horses and tossing boats were flying round, to the great delight of the children, who were not troubled by the heat, although the air was so sultry and heavy that the entire city fairly panted for breath.

"Dinner is ready, Your Highness!" announced a voice from within.

It was a pretty little table that awaited him. Two clean towels did duty as the white tablecloth, and on them stood fruit and flowers, and a big bottle with gold foil about the cork. The cutlets had been fried with potatoes, and were in the frying-pan on a chair beside the table. The credit of it all was Thora's, and she took him by the hand and led him to his place. The cork was drawn, and the two tumblers were filled with the foaming liquid; and as she touched his glass with hers, she said, with a radiant smile and cheeks still rosy from her

culinary exertions: "Good luck to you, dear! After all, you have the best of it!"

"Your health, my dear!"

"Aren't you almost wild with delight now? In the winter—oh fancy! the whole of next winter! Good heavens, it almost seems wrong to eat!"

"I say, what shall we do in the summer holidays? Where shall we go?" he asked, while he went on with his dinner.

"I've been thinking about that, Harold. We'll go for a walking-tour somewhere in the country."

"Oh, a walking-tour!"

"Yes, or we'll take a cottage in the forest of Fontainebleau. A little house there costs almost nothing. And then it'll be your turn to do the cooking and washing, and I—I'll paint."

"I don't think we shall disagree about that," he said smiling, as he stroked her cheek. But the little touch was sufficient to make her spring on to his knees and throw her arms round his

neck. "Oh, you dear, darling old boy! Just think! Paris! Next year, you and I!"

"Yes, but you must go on with your dinner, you know!"

"Oh, be quiet! We can eat when we're old and gray. But drink! You're not drinking anything!"

"Here's to your health then! And the dinner is most delicious, dear!"

She was radiant with happiness, and he—he could not share it with her. The great world, which seemed to have withdrawn into the background while he was in suspense about the scholarship, now rolled forward again, spread itself out, and took possession of his mind. As he sat there, feeling his young wife's kisses on his cheek, he suddenly remembered what Metschnikoff had said in his lecture that day. "The unsolved problems of the world weigh like a nightmare upon the human mind, and it will be the duty of you young scientists to shake it off."

"Oh dear, you're thinking about something else!" she said, giving his nose a little pinch.

"Am I? Well, I'm having my dinner, and you ought to be having yours too."

She went back to her seat somewhat sulkily, though soon was smiling and happy again. But her husband was thinking of what a fellow-student, a young Rumanian, had said while they were walking part of the way home together. "There's a still greater nightmare than the unsolved mysteries," he had said; "and that is all the injustice that poisons life in the world. Are we scientists to shut ourselves up in laboratories and pretend that we have no knowledge of it?"

The air had become more sultry, and Thora's face was pale, and damp with perspiration; but she did not notice it, and chattered on in sheer gladness of heart, with her whole soul in the happiness of this hour of which they had both dreamed.

Suddenly a peal of thunder broke just above the house. The room grew dark, and soon the rain poured down upon the roofs and tree-tops in such torrents that the water splashed from the balcony into the room. Harold rose, shut

the window, and lighted a candle that stood in a bottle.

"Oh, you silly old thing!" cried Thora. "Why, the candlesticks must make their début of course!" And she brought fresh candles, and lighted them in the Doric columns.

"What shall we do later this evening? I'm certainly not going to sit at home and darn stockings."

"You may come with me and hear Anatole France and Jaurès this evening."

"Are they going to speak? Yes, I should like to."

"There's to be a great protest meeting in the Place de la République."

"Protest meeting? What are they going to protest against now?"

"Against the massacre of the Jews in Kiev." And Harold was suddenly all fire and eagerness, and forgot to eat. "You must have read about the terrible murder of the Jews in Kiev! Every one knows that it's the Government that has arranged it all. Just think! The Govern-

ment! In our day! Yes, Thora, you must come to the meeting with me this evening."

Thora had grown a little cross again. "But, my dear Harold," she said, "it won't make the poor Jews rise from the dead if we go out and protest!"

"But, good Lord, Thora, are all these horrors to be allowed to go on while we only go about and amuse ourselves?"

Harold's breath came quickly, and he rose and walked up and down the room. He had at last regained his feeling of confidence; he could be indignant and shocked, and could rage at the injustice. A peculiar sense of gratification welled up within him; he had passed into a stratum of air in which he was accustomed to breathe. And now he became eloquent as he described the revolution that ought soon to break out in Russia, and afterwards over the rest of Europe. His eagerness gave to his face a prophetic beauty as he talked of those conditions that would be hewn down and cleared away.

Thora sat with her hands in her lap, looking

straight before her; then her eyes wandered round the room as though searching for some means of saving the evening for them. When at last Harold sat down and emptied his glass, she said quietly: "You won't leave me this evening, Harold, will you?"

"Leave you? Why, you can come with me! Didn't you hear me say that you positively must come with me?"

"Oh, yes! And stand there in the crowd, inhaling the smell of garlic from all the bawling throats! I've been with you once before."

"I say, Thora, don't you ever think about——"

"Well? About what?" Her eyes were fixed upon him.

"No, no; it doesn't matter."

"I don't think you ought to be so taken up with those dirty Jews somewhere in Russia as quite to forget me. Don't you think we have the right to spend a gay evening together, just we two?"

Harold did not answer, but in a few moments he arose and went out upon the little

balcony. The rain had ceased, and there was a cool freshness in the air, a scent of trees and flowers, and of a washed town. The water stood in pools here and there in the square below, reflecting the lamps of the motor-cars as they flew past, the asphalt shone, and above the countless lights of the city rose the already clear, starry vault of heaven.

Thora joined him there, and stood with her hand on his shoulder. For a moment they stood thus close together, looking out over the illuminated city, the sea of red, yellow and white lights. The noise of carriages and trams, and of thousands of gay voices, was wafted up to them, blending into a muffled roar as of breakers. It was the breathing of the city in the mild evening air.

“You won’t leave me, Harold, will you? It would be so nice if only you would stay at home tonight.” The whispered words were like a caress, and she had taken his hand in hers.

After their coffee and as they were sitting smoking cigarettes, Thora arose and slipped

out quietly. Harold, left alone, was filled with uneasiness. It was as though some rude force compelled him to sit still on a chair and make himself ridiculous. He felt as if he must free himself. Just as some men suffer through being obliged to do without tobacco, so did he feel a purely physical need of going to the meeting this evening, of breathing in the unrest in the huge assembly, the air charged with hatred, with discontent, with the desire for revolution, with indignation over the injustice in the world. Why did he not go? Why was he sitting there? His wife did not want him to go. Very well! One's wife had to be obeyed.

Thora came in with a scarf, and had changed into thin evening shoes. "Now I'm going to dance for you a little, just for you," she said as she moved one or two chairs out of the way. Then she began to dance. There was something spasmodic about her movements, as if she were only thinking of carrying him away with her into her own mood. He sat with a smile on his face and thought it very touching;

but at the same time he felt how ridiculous it was for him to sit there and look at this instead of going to the meeting. He could see Jaurès on the platform, hear his voice ring out, and feel the sway of the audience beneath the speaker's power.

At the same time Harold noticed that Thora had taken out her mandolin, and was sitting on the floor at his feet, singing. There were tears in her voice, and he felt that in her song was a cry to hold a loved thing that she feared slipping from her. He bent down and stroked her hair, and she put up her mouth for a kiss, and the kiss seemed to burn his lips.

But all this, that was so near to him, seemed to be hovering all the time in a strange world of mist. The things that were far away were clearer; but it had not always been so.

He heard her say: "Now I am going to bed. You come too!"

"Yes, yes, I'm coming."

He mechanically refilled his pipe, gazing at the candle. He could hear her undressing, lingeringly, softly, and it fired his senses; it

called to him, and he half rose to his feet to go to her.

"Come now, Harold!" She was already in bed and was pulling up the clothes.

Harold laid down his pipe, and rising from his chair went slowly into the bedroom, thinking, with some displeasure, that women were unlike any other living creature. If he allowed himself to be won over in a matter like this, it would be a little difficult to face his own reflection in the glass tomorrow.

He sat down beside her. She had brought in one of the candlesticks, and the candle threw a yellow light over the simple bed and her pretty, young face, while the slender, warm body beneath the clothes made its appeal to him. She was still flushed and glowing with the thought of what had happened today; she was full of the joyful present, and wanted him to forget everything else.

He took her hands in his and pressed them. "Listen, Thora!" he said. "If you'll be good and let me go to the meeting this evening, I'll

go with you to the Louvre tomorrow in return."

She had just been trying to draw him down to her, and now there came a movement as if something within her drew back and gazed at him. She had struggled so hard to keep this evening for themselves, but now she could do no more!

"Very well then, I suppose you must go," she said, in so matter-of-fact a tone that he did not notice what it concealed.

"Thank you, Thora! That is good of you!" he said, kissing her lightly on the forehead and hurrying away.

The girl lay motionless, listening to his footsteps as he went down the stair. "And here I go washing and mending for him, and giving up everything for myself"—she said to herself—"while he—he thinks first of all about the Jews in Kiev!"

She could not sleep. She worked herself up into a rage. He had often neglected her, but this evening was treachery! It had killed

something, and that too she would have to put up with, she supposed.

Suddenly she put her feet out from the clothes, sat up on the edge of the bed, and gazed at the light from the street. Then she began to dress, and she dressed herself in all her finery. Once more she stood in front of the mirror in the sitting-room, and tried to make the candle show her reflection; and a little later she passed out at the door and down the stair. She seemed to be setting out on something of which she herself was afraid.

Shortly after midnight a cab drew up at the gate, and Thora stepped out; but a hand from within the carriage held her back, while its owner, their friend the Finnish sculptor, begged for a kiss.

"Let me go!" she said.

"No, no! Don't be so unkind!"

Thora looked about her, and even cast a glance up at their flat. It was in darkness; and as he continued to draw her closer, she yielded and let him take the kiss, and then, after ringing the bell, she hurried in.

Harold was still out, and when she got into bed she began to think over all that had happened since the morning. Ah! this day to which they had both looked forward as to a paradise—that it should end like this! Was it her fault that they could not bear the happiness when at last it came?

“O God! O God!” she cried as she buried her head under the clothes, and burst into violent sobbing.

IV

THE next day was Sunday and Harold and Thora drove through the rain-refreshed town, through Paris in the fragrance and brightness of an early June day. There was a peculiar, clear freshness over everything; one could fancy that all the trees and flowers had just budded. And over all was a sky so bright, so blue, so quivering with sunshine, that it seemed to span the earth like a far-off mingling of music and light.

It was the Finnish sculptor who had come and carried them off. He was a gay dandy, and on this occasion wore a cream-colored summer suit. He had a thousand francs a month from his father, a rich land-owner in Finland. The money lasted for the first three or four days, and afterwards he had his meals on credit at a little creamery, and worked industriously. Today he was in funds again and of course he must have some one with him to celebrate the

advent of summer; and in order to begin artistically, he had ordered two carriages to drive after the one in which they themselves sat, both of them filled with flowers.

Thora and Harold were not quite comfortable together this morning, and both were glad of the companionship of this eccentric host. The procession drove down the Avenue d'Orleans, past Marshal Ney on his pedestal, with his sword drawn for France, and on past the Luxembourg gardens, where the fountains played among the statues, and greenery, and flowers, and greenery, and yet more greenery. Harold's spirits rose. He pushed back his hat, leaned back in the carriage, and held up his face towards the clear sunshine. He laughed. The Finn talked, and they all laughed. People stopped to look at this procession, this carriage followed by two more carriages laden with all this splendor. Now they had crossed the Seine, and the Gardens of the Tuileries opened out before them—lawns, monuments, great vases, statues, obelisks, and everywhere a wealth of red, yellow and white

flowers. Here the Finn beckoned to another carriage, made the flower-sellers fill it with roses, and bade it join the procession. "You're mad!" cried Thora, laughing. "You're quite out of your mind!" But she clapped her hands and beamed with delight. "That's what she wants her husband to be like," thought Harold. "She's happy now."

They were now approaching the Place de l'Etoile, and dashed beneath the lofty Arc de Triomphe, and on towards the Bois de Boulogne. Everywhere there were people in summer attire, and a constant stream of carriages in each direction. Motor horns hooted among rearing horses; an open carriage came along, looking like an enormous bed of roses, but proved to be full of ladies' hats; a long-handled pair of eye-glasses was raised before a painted face; a young man in the carriage stood up and made a deep bow. Wavelets of powder and perfume hovered in the air. Nearer the forest there were riders too, a world of leafage, green glades, young women in white dresses. Laughter filled the air; children played. Paris

unfolded herself, and was all fragrance and summer.

They breakfasted in a pavilion in the wood; Thora sang, the Finn sang, and Harold whistled. Champagne was placed upon the table, and over the foaming wine Harold, who, until then, had been in a gay mood, happened to think of the work-people who provided the Finnish land-owner with his income. The son probably spent in a couple of days what one of the farm-laborers earned in a year.

On their way back they stopped at one wing of the Louvre, and the three young people ascended the broad stair to the paintings section on the first floor. The building re-echoed with the sound of footsteps and voices from the stream of people passing up and down through the various rooms.

There was a pervading gallery-smell—a smell of oil, colors and dust. There was no one standing copying, for it was Sunday. But the paintings are never so alive as when one feels it is summer outside. The warm sunshine streaming through the high windows excites

the senses, making them keenly receptive of great and beautiful impressions. The masterpieces no longer hang upon the walls; they flow into one's mind. The flood of golden light makes the shadows so soft and full of a dull glow. Harold was oblivious of everything here. He came from champagne in the Bois; he came to Rubens and Velasquez. And how many different moods did each picture call up? By practice he had made himself able to feel the lines and color of a painting, but that was not enough. Today he could only see the time from which they sprang. Vandyck's knights in spurs and velvet came from exploits and were going to court; they stood ready to mount their horses and set off at a gallop. What then? What were the times, the people surrounding this upper class? He had not thought of this until today; but once more, as with the champagne in the Bois, it gave an after-taste to the enjoyment. Tintoretto's holy feasts seemed to give out a fragrance of fruit and wine; the silk on his figures could actually be heard to rustle. Rubens' angels were little

balls of merriment, and the flush on the skin of Titian's women was so lifelike that one almost expected them to move and welcome a guest.

The spirit and the people of many centuries stood out vividly from these endless rows of paintings, and men and women of the present day moved past them, stopped and absorbed this remote life which an artist has rescued from death, received it into their consciousness, and were nourished by it; then passed on to other pictures, and finally went home with the feeling that they had been in new and magic lands.

The sculptor walked about the gallery with the critical mien of one who understands all about it, and praises and condemns in accordance with his present-day conception of art. But Harold's gaze was fixed on Thora. Thora's eyes were full of fancies, as if all this splendor on the walls had infected her and filled her mind with an ardent delight. She held herself erect, the movements of her body were assured, her smile far-away; she stood still for a moment, went on again, stopped once more,

and actually sunned herself in this revelation of all that constantly occupied her thoughts. There was a slight flush upon her face, as though she were swaying in a dance with one whom she secretly loved.

Harold stood beside her in front of David's great picture of Napoleon's coronation. The Emperor, with a mantle of ermine over his shoulders and oak-leaves about his brow, thinks the old pope is too slow, and has himself seized the crown and is about to place it on the head of the kneeling Empress. Round them is an assemblage of ladies and generals of the Republic, who cannot hide their smiles at this religious comedy which they thought was past and done with.

Suddenly Harold said: "That man was one of the world's greatest criminals."

Thora started as if, while music was being played, she had heard a gun fired. "What?" she said, gazing at him with lifted eyebrows. "What did you say?"

"No, I only meant that he made a bungle of the revolution. How far along the world would

have been if only he had lost the battle of Lodi!"

"Is that how you look at art?" she asked resentfully, and involuntarily looked towards the sculptor, who was approaching.

"No, no! Don't be cross! It was only something I happened to think about."

"You're at the protestation meeting still, I can see," she answered, turning away from him.

"What's the matter?" asked the sculptor.

Harold smiled and continued: "Have you noticed that the painters of the Renaissance almost always kept to the upper classes? But every one can't have worn velvet and brocade in those days either."

"It isn't true!" cried his wife, turning quickly towards him again. "Didn't Rembrandt paint both rags and butchers' meat? And there hangs a street-arab pulling at his shirt, done by Murillo. Isn't that democratic enough either?"

"She's still angry with me," thought Harold, walking away from them.

It was true, however, that he could not keep his thoughts on the pictures as he had done before. Irrelevant impressions lurked in the background of his mind, and, pressing forward, would make him quite forget for long moments what picture he really was looking at. It worried him, but he felt nevertheless that it could not be otherwise. Looking at Veronese's beautiful women, he thought of the number of slaves there must have been to maintain such an article of luxury. What is it then that you bring forth, O mind of man? What is all this to me who stand here and live today? Art? Is that enough? Culture? Is that enough?

The paintings disappeared, and crowds of down-trodden thralls of various ages pressed forward and began to raise threatening hands. And Thora and the sculptor were standing close together in front of a picture, in another world altogether.

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The following winter was different from the one before for the young couple up on Mont-

rouge. Thora went to a school of painting, and when Harold came home from the Institute, nothing was ready, and he had to get his dinner himself. She went every evening to the Café de Versailles to meet the artists, and he stayed at home to read, or went to meetings. And if it did happen that they were together by their little lamp for an evening, there were long intervals of silence; and now and again one of them would look up at the other, wondering at that cleft between them that each saw growing ever wider.

V

ONE day in May, when there was sunshine and budding leafage in Christiania, Harold Mark was walking up Carl Johan Street. He was looking about him, for he expected to meet Dr. Wilse, with whom he had spoken on the telephone for a moment. At last he saw the tall figure coming across the Students' Grove. It was three years since the two friends had met, and they stopped involuntarily, each to look for the possible change that might have come in the other.

"Did you come by boat last night?" Wilse asked as they shook hands.

"This morning by the boat from Havre," answered Harold, "and the crossing was splendid."

"Then your wife was not seasick?"

"My wife! No. She stayed behind in Paris."

"What? Have you left her behind?"

Harold Mark pulled at his moustache as they sauntered up the street.

"Well, my wife, you see, she—she's going to stay there another year and go to the school of art. It was such a good thing that we could manage it. She's really awfully clever. —Oh, but I say! Ha, ha, ha! I can't help laughing."

"What's the joke?"

"Why, the distances here!" And Harold stopped and looked from the Storting, past the Grand Hotel, up towards the University, as if he were at a puppet-show.

"Does it seem so small?"

"I didn't know that all the distances in this town measured only two steps. I can't help laughing. If you light your cigar at the Storting, the match burns all the way up to the Palace Hill. It's unique! And just fancy that we went about here for seven long student-years, and imagined that this was a large town!"

"You needn't be so stuck-up because you've come from the Continent!"

They strolled along the street a little way, while Dr. Wilse told Marks of the happenings of their mutual friends. Most of them were scattered about in various towns and districts, two or three had drifted to America, and only a few were still in town. He himself had just begun as a specialist in skin diseases.

"But you must have a good deal to tell on the subject that is new," he said. "You persuaded the chimpanzee to let himself be infected with lues down there at the Pasteur Institute."

Harold nodded, but laughed ironically.

"Laughing again?"

"Well, surely I'm allowed to laugh? But I say—shall we go and drink a farewell glass together?"

"Farewell? You don't mean to say you're going away again at once?"

Harold smiled, but did not seem inclined to enter into the subject. They went into the Grand Hotel Café, where Harold ordered port, and the two friends sat down by a window and drank to one another.

"I suppose you've finished working for your doctor's degree now?" Wilse asked.

His companion smiled again, and looked out at the people passing up and down the street.

"Do you know what I admire in these people?" he said suddenly, without answering his friend's question. "Their capability of dullness. They know, of course, if they would think a little, that, at this moment, the most terrible things are happening round about them, and yet they dress themselves up and admire and laugh and haven't a care in the world. When you see ladies like those just coming out of the confectioner's, you'd think the world was surfeited with chocolate and nice cakes. Well, well, after all, that's wisdom—the art of living. Why in the world should one trouble one's self about the thousands of idiots sitting biting their nails who have nothing?"

"You won't answer my question about your doctor's degree?" said Wilse, with a searching glance, as he offered Harold a cigarette. Harold lighted it, and smiled again as he blew

clouds of smoke towards the window; then he leaned back in his chair and looked for a moment at his companion.

"I say," he began at last, "don't you think we doctors are a set of ridiculous fellows?"

"Well, perhaps," said Wilse, blinking his eyes. He liked to hear his friend's paradoxes, to which he had been accustomed formerly.

"I won't mention facts such as that half the prescriptions we write are at best harmless, that only a fourth part actually kill people, and that the rest may help to make some one or other well again. We'll say nothing about that, for it may possibly be different some day. A famous surgeon in England confessed to me over his third glass of whiskey, that when he thought of all the poor devils that he had killed by mistake, neglect, or sheer ignorance, he almost went mad. But we'll say nothing about that either; things may become better some day. No, the main point is that if we want to be anything more than a cobbler, who patches up a torn shoe as well as he can, we must go to the source of most of the diseases

in this world, namely, the conditions of life. Most people die either of starvation or of over-feeding, either of idleness or of overwork. There are factories where the employés have no prospect of reaching the age of forty. We wear shirts made by young women whose daily wage is so small that they must add to it by becoming prostitutes. On the other hand, comes old Metschnikoff and says: 'Another victory for medical science! I've got a poor ape infected with lues!' What do you think of that?"

"You want us to mix up medical science with politics?" asked Wilse.

"I once believed," Harold went on, "that mankind, taken as a whole, was on its way to—well, to some better land, that the time would come when there would be no more sickness, and when the human race would be healthy, beautiful and happy. But I know now that the chances are just as great of our going steadily and surely to hell. A famous anthropologist said recently that a more or less upright, happy community of men is an

impossibility, simply because before that time mankind will have become completely degenerate. What do you say to that?"

"What do I say to that?" said Wilse, smiling a crooked smile as he turned his glass round and round on the table.

"Well, I myself think that it's we who have to be responsible for the direction it takes, either to ruin or to a richer, greater type of man. It's just we doctors. Do you see that?"

"That's saying a great deal! Is all that responsibility to rest upon us?"

"Yes, if we don't shirk it, which is another matter. But if we really wake up one day and see that it is actually the whole of mankind that is diseased, we wouldn't seal ourselves up in some specialty and sit comfortably in a consulting-room putting on little patches and letting everything else take care of itself. No, we wouldn't do that."

Dr. Wilse flushed. "That's a hit at me," he said with an attempt at a laugh.

"Yes, and at myself, too, sitting here and

only talking and enjoying myself drinking this liquid, which, after all, is the main source. . . . No, let us talk about something pleasant. How is your sister? Married? Really?"

"What are you now going to do, then?"

"I! Ah, my friend, I intend to take no thought for anything but myself."

"Oh, yes; that would be like you!"

Harold kept on emptying and refilling his glass from the bottle that stood between them. His face was flushed and his eyes shone, but there were continual nervous movements of his features.

"I'll go into the country and make love to young girls. Oh, you wouldn't believe how much I want to let myself go! But I say—how is it with you? I expect in your innermost soul you're cherishing some bright dream or other, aren't you?"

"A bright dream?" said Wilse soberly, looking at his companion.

"Well, yes. You must have—or haven't you?—deep down, as it were, a feeling that tomorrow, or in a few years' time, all evil will

be at an end, and that the world will have attained everything that we and the other millions are dreaming about. Don't you feel like that, Peter? I think——" Harold closed his eyes for a moment, and bent his head over his glass. He seemed as though he were about to rise suddenly and go, but leaned back again, fingering his glass and looking into the dark wine.

"After all," he said in a low voice, "we belong to the sun, but there are a few things that must be cleared out of the way first. Or perhaps—yes, that must be it—we have to go like beggars to the great world of suffering to acquire by barter the right to laugh two or three times a week. Ha, ha, ha! Why, I'm actually laying bare my immortal soul!"

He rose suddenly, paid the waiter and prepared to leave the restaurant. "Confounded nuisance," he thought, "that even to your best friend it's impossible to talk about what's nearest to your heart!"

"You're a strange fellow!" said Wilse, adjusting his glasses as they stood in the street

before parting. "You talk about drinking a farewell glass, and you won't tell me what you're going to start on!"

Harold laughed and looked up the street. "Well, my friend," he said, "it may be that I shall have to begin on something or other that you others won't like. This ought perhaps to have been our farewell; but joking apart—can't we make a night of it? You come out with me! We'll first have supper, and then—well, confound it, we can surely just once more crown ourselves with vine-leaves. Very well, then, eight o'clock. *Au revoir!*"

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A few days later Harold Mark sat in his unpretending little flat in the poor part of the town, and looked about him. He had raked together the necessary furniture, most of it being second-hand things bought at an auction. Why not? In the corner room all his surgical instruments shone in their glass cases, and his plate was already fastened to the street door. He had also managed to get hold of an elderly maid, who at the present moment was rattling

pots and pans in the kitchen in the preparation of dinner.

“So here I am!” he murmured as he looked about him and then began to pace up and down. “It’s funny that I, who was considered a talented fellow and with the makings of a professor in me, should have gone quite wrong—ha, ha!—have become a revolutionist and have landed here.” He stopped at the window and looked out. Rain and mud, a view of factories and smoke and dirty houses, hang it all! Even in the poor districts in Paris you still had the feeling that you were in that glorious city. There was always some temple or other of intellect and genius close by. But here! Hideous houses, refuse in the street, spirits, fear of hell, and priests who went round and looked after the dustbins, and scolded on God’s behalf when they doled out a halfpenny. “Well, I’ve chosen to settle down here, so it’s all right.”

He began to pace up and down again with his hands in his pockets. “What am I here for exactly?” he went on to himself. “Well,

I want to arrange things with—with what? With God, the theologian would say. With my world's conscience, I myself say. Yes, that's it. I want to serve my time and try to get the moral means to live some day in nice surroundings, cultivate my mind, drink in beauty, and have a share in all the joys and pleasures of the world. That is what I want, I suppose, and some day I shall probably be able to afford it, too. But there are a few things to be cleared out of the way first, and a few things that I must be quite certain about. What are they? Well, in the first place, where we really come from. I must form an opinion on that point. That's one thing. And in the second place, where we all go to—not science, technics, culture and politics, but mankind, all men. Where are we going to? I can never feel quite easy until I've formed a decided opinion on the subject. We must be here for some purpose. We must be going somewhere, and not into abysmal darkness; no, it must surely be towards the sun, when all souls stream together into the

infinite light. That's where we're going. But I must be perfectly certain about it before I can devote myself entirely to my own happiness. Certain! When shall I be that? When shall I be that? And is there much good in my digging down into the dirt here, and giving up all the youth I have still left? Is there really any good?"

He stood still for a moment facing the window, and whistled.

"Good? No, of course not, but the thing is that I must have every one with me. Perhaps when it comes to the point, that's why I'm here now. Every one with me? I go about dreaming that some day our mind will take in the whole human choir, and then there must be no voice out of tune. That's why I'm beginning here. It's most needed here.

"But, dear me, isn't it ridiculous to want to do it? If I look around I see what resistance there is. Don't they, one and all, creep into their shell and call it the world and feel comfortable? And I—I want to get hold of all the others. I don't want to be comfortable

alone; I want to have every one with me. When I learned anything new in my science, the pleasure was never complete because I thought: Why don't the others know this? I wanted the others with me. I wanted to rise to an ever richer life, but I wanted to hold the others by the hand. Come with me! Even the smallest shall come with me. Some day we shall, all together, raise our voices in the great hymn. A dream, a belief, music in the soul—what more?"

He smiled as he faced the window. For a moment of silent happiness he looked down into the depths of himself. Then he passed his hand across his forehead.

"Yes, I see—I see perhaps part of the immense ocean, but what am I against this huge volume? If most that happens in the world is wrong, if all sound is discord, what is the good of my drinking it into my being and living as I do? What can I change? What am I equal to? Here I stand and occupy an area of half a square metre in a gloomy room in a corner of the world, and at the same time

the whole world is buzzing in my mind. What am I equal to? The great world-conscience is one thing, but the ability to alter anything is another. What can I put right, I, a little insect, whose life can be extinguished in a moment? And yet I try to take the burden of the world upon my shoulders, and to rise and carry it on a little way. Good heavens, what a comedy! God help me!"

He bowed his head.

"Thora! Thora! We were happy, we two, when the world was only you and I. Where are you now? What are you doing now?"

VI

SOME stirring years passed, during which time Harold Mark's name became well known. He began as a socialist and soon became a total abstainer; he spoke at the great labor demonstrations, was abused by the middle-class press and applauded by his own; he was continually attending committee meetings and calling at the editorial offices of his own party's newspapers, always in impatient haste, as though only anxious to be free to go on to the next. He was soon a familiar figure in the houses of the poor district where, as doctor, he was always trudging up and down the dark stairways both day and night. He never had any leisure, never any time to rest. He entered into the joys and sorrows of the individual, but did not on that account lose interest in the great outside world. If he lay awake at night thinking about a patient whose life might yet possibly be saved, the great

world would at the same time be passing through his brain, and his thoughts be in Russia, following the long train of prisoners on their way to Siberia, or with the labor conflicts in the various countries. In the Balkan States, in Austria, in Russia, in Asia, there were down-trodden races waiting for their hour of release. Was it a matter of indifference to him? The pious Europeans went forth with the cross in front of their guns, and devastated with fire and sword the homes of peaceful peasants in other parts of the world; and every time a government committed a mean act, the priests went in a procession to church and praised God. These thronging scenes from the great world were always in his mind, and became especially vivid when he should have been sleeping. They often seemed like feverish visions; but bromide can do nothing for a sick world.

As doctor also, he now began to be exceedingly sceptical of himself, for the more he travelled and saw and learned, the greater was the demand he made upon himself, and the

better he knew how easy it was to fail. He would come home inconsolable at having made a wrong diagnosis, and thereby perhaps killed a man. On coming to a bedside he would sometimes instantly see that he could do nothing, and yet he had to write a prescription. He would have to prescribe a tonic for a consumptive woman who worked in the steam-laden atmosphere of a laundry; and if he said what was the truth—"Go into the country! The medicine you need is sunshine, fresh air and good food,"—she might answer, "Well, give me the money for it!" He soon became cautious about ordering another kind of work, for if a young girl left what she had, and did not perhaps at once get anything else to do, she would end on the street, and some day would come to him again with a disease that was still worse.

His day was cut up by visits, and by telephone-calls during mealtimes or about midnight just as he had dropped off to sleep. He would come home after a night spent at a confinement, and only just have time to drink a

cup of coffee before his consulting hours began again. But he was not allowed to be tired. It might cost a human life if his judgment were not wide awake. After a toilsome day he might sit down in a comfortable chair with a book, but the telephone would ring again. He must always be ready to go when called. When he entered a sick-room, many eyes would be turned towards him, requiring him to find a remedy immediately. When a patient recovered, he seldom received any thanks; if the patient died, he often felt that the sorrowing relatives hated him. He had grown accustomed to all this. He went up to attics where several families with children were crowded together in one room, where a man might be lying in delirium in the one bed, and a hollow-cheeked woman sitting on a chair by his side with five or six children clinging to her in terror, while on the other side of the room sat a party of men playing cards. He had grown accustomed to all this. As he walked along the street, it was still with an easy gait, and he still wore his hat on one side;

and he could often be heard whistling or humming a tune as he went up the stairs.

He had buried himself here, but he meant to keep up with his science, go to hospitals and see big operations, read his party's papers and those of his opponents and of the world. When once he was in bed and his eyes closed, then his mind opened, and he still felt the great waves from the ocean without, washing in and out of his heart.

He was still young. His mind could thrill in sympathy with so many things.

But every morning when he opened his letter-box he felt a secret excitement. Would there be a letter from Paris today?

There had been only one since he parted from her, and he knew so well that it would be so; yet he always hoped without really expecting.

When he came home weary and sat in peace for a little while, a sigh would sometimes escape him. "Oh, God; how long before I shall have earned my freedom?"

Freedom! Oh, yes, the day must soon come

when he would think he had served his time. That he, at any rate, was unable to bear the world's burden any farther, was something he would have to look into, however. He would have to content himself with less. When, then, would he have done his duty? When would he be free?

There were moments in which it seemed to his fancy that he would once more live through those first happy days in Paris with Thora, and the world stretched wide and radiant before his eyes.

There were only one or two things that had to be cleared away first. He had to earn and buy his freedom.

But why should he always have this great window looking on to mankind? Mankind was perhaps moving on to destruction, or perhaps to the great dawn—who knows? But why should he feel this ridiculous responsibility for the result, and what difference would it make if he did rush about and fuss night and day in this little out-of-the-way corner of the world?

To have interests becomes wearisome in the end. To want to keep up with everything, to feel it of the greatest consequence that everything finds its proper place—all this is wearisome. Even if he had not exactly thought of it, there had always been the oppressive feeling that he had not time to laugh, to enjoy himself, to rest, to see old friends. So there was more and more that positively must be cleared away before he could feel free.

But why should every little step forward take such a sadly long time? Does not mankind trudge round and round in the same stupid circle? We talk, write, work, fight, and after many years of it, everything is as it was before. Harold Mark began to feel it. "Good heavens, Wilse! You call me a fanatic, which is the stick-in-the-mud's way of saying that we are impatient and want things to go a little more quickly. Don't you see that when we say total abstinence we mean something ten thousand times greater. If alcohol lies like a stone right across the road, and the chariot of mankind—which I still believe to

be a triumphal chariot—comes up and wishes to drive on, is it to take us a hundred years to get that old stone cleared out of the way? No, my friend! Room for the chariot! Away with the obstacle! If there are any idiots who stand in the way, put them gently on one side. Room for that which is greater! Room for man!”

Harold Mark could not stand the everlasting trudging about on the same spot. His patience began to fail through the continual waiting, and doing and saying the same things over and over and over again. He became rougher in his speeches, wilder in his articles, more and more ruthless towards persons and things. Once he had made his hearers enthusiastic; now he made them furious. At one time he had perhaps made them believe; now he made them hate. He had opponents before, and now he made enemies. Never mind! What difference did it make?

As time passed a change took place in him as doctor. When beside a patient he no longer thought about the human being, but about the

disease itself in its widest sense. "Yes, here's another tuberculosis!" he would say angrily to himself after sounding a patient's chest. "When will social conditions be sufficiently clean and upright as to make this unnecessary?" "And here is cancer again! What in the world are those barbers' blocks in the great laboratories doing, not to have found a remedy for it yet? Are we still to go on boasting of our science?" When he went into a workingman's little home, and saw the ravages that alcohol and hunger together had made, it was not sympathy he felt. No, he cursed and swore to himself. "This is what we must see every day, and it will be the same a hundred years hence, if we don't make a clean sweep. And still those confounded capitalists say that we exaggerate and are fanatical, and the priests accept kind gifts from the spirit-merchants, and fold their hands and thank God!"

Harold Mark's ordinary emotions gradually grew into fury, and the great world grew ever darker as he looked out over it; but he

would still sometimes writhe in his bed and moan: "O God, when shall I be free? When shall I have served my time? Am I still to go on leading this life for years? When shall I be free?"

VII

ONE evening late in March, Harold came slowly up the stairs in the tenement-house where he lived. The rain was pouring in torrents and the west wind thundered over the town, tearing the tiles from the roofs as it passed. His yellow mackintosh was dripping and his felt hat soaked. His galoshes left little puddles at every step. It was dark in the passage. He turned up the light, stripped off his wet things, and by force of habit went into his consulting-room to wash his hands. The room smelt of drugs and of the laboring-class patients who daily visited it. From the kitchen came the odor of fried fish, his elderly maid having probably thought that just today he might want things a little comfortable when, at last, he came home.

"Supper's ready!" she said, as she stood, broad and white-haired, in the doorway; but

the next moment she started back, for she had never before seen such a look on his face.

"Thank you!" he said as he hung up the towel.

In the sitting-room he stood still and looked round. He had often thought that his furniture was incredibly common, but nevertheless this evening it seemed much too good for him. "Oh, Minda!" he said as he sat down and unfolded his napkin, "will you please take the telephone-receiver off the hook? I want to be undisturbed this evening."

"Yes, sir; you need a rest, I'm sure," she answered sympathetically, and did as he asked her. "Is there anything else you want, sir?" she asked when she came back.

"No, nothing, I think; thank you."

"Then perhaps I might go to the prayer-meeting at the Tabernacle, sir?"

"Oh, dear yes!" he replied with a sigh.

A little later the sound of her retreating footsteps died away on the stairs, and he was alone. He ate mechanically, and, every now

and then, fell into a brown study and sat staring at the lamp.

At last he folded his napkin, rose from the table, took up his pipe, and filled and lighted it. For a moment he stood looking through the clouds of smoke as he murmured to himself: "Well, I've got to take the consequences of what I do. It'll do nobody any good if I go to pieces. But honestly—haven't I been going down hill all the time? Wasn't everything much better before?"

He paced the floor for a little while, and then went into his consulting-room and turned up the light over the writing-table; but after seating himself and taking out a sheet of note-paper, he sat hesitating, with the pen in his hand, looking at the light.

"Dear Mother," he finally began.

"Tomorrow the papers will tell you in large-type headlines that the ill-famed law-suit has gone against me. I have today been sentenced to pay a heavy fine for 'slander,' the expressions I used concerning the said gentlemen who have made fortunes by the sale of

intoxicating liquors have been nullified, and I myself am made to stand in the pillory of the country, where any wretch is at liberty to come and spit at me. It gives one a strange feeling, and as this is the fourth time that I have been honored in this way, I suppose people will really begin to look pityingly at you, and not think it strange that you should have gray hair. I think, however, that this time too you will be proud, and will continue to require me to consider only my own convictions.

“On the other hand, as I sit here, I feel strangely irresolute. I don’t seem to know myself. My mind was once filled with bright, golden dreams, but now I dream only of enemies, and am filled only with hatred. Where have I drifted to? Have I myself been ruined in the fight for a good cause? Dear Mother, I am unhappy. I am not only tired, but thoroughly ashamed; and you must bear with me when I, a gray-haired revolutionist, come and lay my head in your lap to confess to you.

“I think I have for long enough had a great, earnest desire to be useful, but it has brought me down to the level of a little dog that is always running between people’s legs. Is that necessary? Belief is one thing, the joy of at-

tack another; but is wishing to improve the world the same thing as to be continually swearing and raging? That is what I am thinking as I sit here; and there is a mirror close to me, but I dare not raise my head and look into it. Oh, Mother, it *is* a sad fate after all! I, who for a good many years have imagined that I was a clearer of the ground, must now admit that the evil I have rooted out has been very little, while the evil I have done has been much more.

“And I believed I was not an egoist! I like a glass of wine, and an occasional dram is delicious; and yet when, in my practice, my eyes were opened to the ravages of alcohol, I gladly threw my own glass into the fire. War against that which is poisoning the world! War against those that enrich themselves on the ruin of others! But why should I be vulgar when I wage war for so great and lofty an idea?

“He that wants to cleanse an Augean stable must of necessity, in so doing, smell foully. It cannot be avoided. But as I sit here I look at my hands. I have often written with a venomous pen, I have talked fire and brimstone, I have persecuted more or less honorable

men, and thrown evil-smelling bombs into happy homes. The evidence that I was obliged to make use of today has been called coarse and scandalous; and now that I am no longer blinded by my struggle to defend myself, I think my enemies may be right. I look at my hands, and they seem to be spotted with crimson stains; and perhaps 'all the perfumes of Arabia' will not make them white again.

"Oh, Mother, can it be that he that fights for a renewal of the world accomplishes nothing but the deeper and deeper sinking of himself?

"Do you know of any remedy for me, Mother? It is so long since I saw the sun. I want to breathe in the scent of flowers, move about in bright rooms, be with happy, harmonious people. I want to forget who I am and what I have done, and especially to become something different from what I now am.

"I wonder whether this feeling that I have had for several years of having the fate of the world resting on my shoulders, has not been a disease; for it is perfectly absurd. Why should I never be able to hear beautiful music without, at the same time, being aware of the

complaining cries of those that have to stand outside? When I have plenty to eat I am thinking all the time of those that have to live on the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. This consciousness that the world outside is staring in at my windows has made my rooms cold. The world? That is wrong, however; it is only the shadow of the world. My being is filled with the misery of this world, with strikes, poverty, injustice, crimes, bad governments and stupid laws. Is that the world? Yes, the newspapers' and telegrams' caricature of it. But there are also fine, healthy men, beautiful women, entrancing landscapes, roses and grapes. What room do all these take up in my life? None. I have gradually become so unfamiliar, Mother dear, with everything like fragrance and brightness.

"If only the world's unfortunate ones had been worth our sacrifice! I know them a little better now. Who deserted me today? My party friends. Enemies can be bad, but those that share your opinions are often much worse. Mankind. Mother, do you know mankind?

"Do you know who the oppressed are? They are people that want to get on the top so as to be able to oppress others! What do

most workmen do when they get higher wages? They do worse work. Look out over the world where we go about and boast of our progress. What do you see? The continents are resounding with racial hatred, the nations with party hatred, the different groups in the parties hate one another, and in each group members stab one another in order to rise and rule over the others. And I set myself up against all this and will reform it! I!

“Good Lord, Mother! If I could only get rid of this great, burning sympathy with everything and everybody. Who has poisoned my life with it? What good does it do any one? If I never laugh myself, will it make others weep less? If I go about in the dark myself, will the others then have sunshine? I know that the nearest of all progress is economic and social justice; but even if we reach this in a hundred years, we have only reached the beginning—man. Who will undertake to form a greater type of man? Is there material in this crowd of sallow, rights-bawling proletarians with hollow chests and crooked limbs, to make an Apollo? Will their mind ever become a temple and not a dingy tenement? And

the others? The parasites on the food-mountain, who have everything, but have deserved nothing—the priests with their false prating, the politicians with their party humbug, the executioners in uniform—are they any better? I do not know. I no longer have any faith. But if not, why do we voluntarily hang ourselves upon the cross merely to provide some fools with food?

“Good-night, Mother! I dread going to bed, for when I close my eyes the nightmare begins. I think about everything and everybody. My mind enlarges itself so as to embrace the whole world. Mankind becomes a seething ocean that rolls backwards and forwards through all my being. I grow dizzy with the feeling of infinity. Millions of cries for help rise from the hopeless confusion; I see a crowd of faces, contorted with pain; arms are outstretched for help as from millions in danger of drowning. What can I do? Share their suffering? Be ruined myself? That I can do, and I am on the way to it. But I am like the good swimmer who feels that some one has seized hold of his feet to keep himself up. I kick them away. I surely have the

right to save myself!—Ah, Mother, I am hungering and thirsting for the happy youth that I have sacrificed, but God knows whether it is not too late to overtake it.”

VIII

THE little west-country town where Fru Mark had her school lay among high mountains at the head of a bay, and looked out to the open sea. It was the meeting-place of breezes laden with the scent of sea and snow-mountain, of cultivated field and meadow along the shore, and of fish and fish-oil from the quays. The houses with their red-tiled roofs stood in irregular groups dotted all about the hills, and the principal street wound past the quays, curved round a headland, and finally disappeared in its course through the surrounding district. In the harbor, especially in the fishing-season, there was life and bustle with the numerous vessels of all kinds. Large steamers lay to at the quays and took in cargoes of fish-oil and dried fish; steam and motor fishing-boats came in from the banks with their crews clad in oilskins; a multitude of sailing-vessels, large and small, came in and

out; and, in among them all, there now and then would shoot a gray torpedo-boat to fetch the mail for the fleet outside.

It was a town with its face turned to the sea, whence it drew its life, a small town with large fish-merchants and large ship-owners, whose cargo-steamers made tracks across distant oceans. At one time a single man, the great Consul Pram, had ruled here like a king. The fishing-islands, the ships, the fish, the fish-oil, the meeting-houses, the banks, the posts of honor, and the princely white house outside the town, were all his. He was an imperious man, who, according to report, had first become rich by letting his vessels carry slaves from Africa to America; but he died a sincere Christian, and forgave all his enemies except Fru Mark.

Things were different now. After his time, men in small circumstances had worked themselves up to greatness, and movements had come into power that went much further than Fru Mark. Every morning that lady might be seen coming down the main street on her

way to the school, and, later in the day, she passed up it again to a little white house that stood on a rocky knoll outside the town. At one time there were a good many people who dared not show her any sign of recognition because she was at war, not only with the priests, but also with the king of the town, Consul Pram. Now every one greeted her, and on festive occasions they called her the mother of the town. She was just entering on her sixties, was tall and dignified, with a refined, small-featured face set in a frame of white hair, and always dressed in dark colors. She was on the municipal and school boards, and had the credit of starting the home for the aged, the foundlings' hospital, the art union, the labor college and even the little theatre; and it had all been done under protest from King Pram. Fru Mark also kept her eyes open, and would now and then pay unexpected visits. If a drunken man went home and ill-treated his wife, they might suddenly hear a knock at the door, and there stood a white-haired woman. People said of

her that she never laughed, but her smile was one that no one would forget. She had once been the mistress of a large country house, but was unhappily married; and she had had much to contend with before she had gained by her own efforts the position in which she now stood.

One Saturday evening in the beginning of May there was great excitement in the club. The gentlemen of the town were sitting at small tables with their whiskey and soda and their newspaper, while broad streams of light fell through the tall windows from the sun which was setting in clouds of fire far out in the west. The door opened, and the florid, spectacled face of Lawyer Gundahl looked in. Two or three heads were lifted with an expectant look, for Lawyer Gundahl always had news to tell.

“What is it, lawyer?”

“You never heard such a thing!” he said, coming in and waving a paper. “Have you read the *Evening Paper*?”

“No! Is there any news?”

"Appointments, gentlemen! New senior physician at the seaside hospital!"

"Is he appointed at last?" Several men rose and looked eagerly at the little newspaper, which seemed to have come straight from the press.

"Yes, he's appointed!" cried the little lawyer with a grimace. "And I'll just ask you to guess who it is the Government has honored us with. Just guess!" And he held the newspaper behind his back.

"Dr. Prah!" suggested several, and a stout man with a sandy beard and spectacles, sitting at one of the tables, rose and stood with glass in one hand and newspaper in the other. It was Dr. Prah, the district-physician.

The lawyer shook his head, and looked at the paper through his glasses.

"Dr. Kemp then?" was suggested in various parts of the room.

He was present, too, however, standing by the wall, with an attempt at a smile on his pale, clean-shaven face.

"Oh, dear no, good people! The doctors in

our town don't speculate either in the friendship of working-men or in total abstinence. No, we're going to have a famous man this time. It's Dr. Harold Mark!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the district-physician, coming nearer.

"You're only humbugging!" said Dr. Kemp, still trying to smile.

"It surely isn't the man who was recently sentenced to hard labor?" asked Consul Wahl, approaching from one of the tables.

"You are in error, sir!" said Gundahl. "He should have been sentenced to hard labor, but the authorities decided to aggravate the punishment, and are sending him here instead. He's in too bad odor out there, but he's good enough for here!"

"It's surely impossible for him to get a post so immediately after that scandalous lawsuit!" said several.

"It's in the paper," said the lawyer.

Heads were crowded together over the paper. Yes, positively it was!

"How does the Government dare!"

"We're to put up with this!"

There was a buzz of voices in the room; the excitement increased and clenched fists were raised. Once more the Government had rewarded a radical with one of the best posts in the country.

The editor of the *Evening Paper*, a small, pale man, had come in, and now suddenly got up on a chair.

"I say! I suggest that we telegraph a protest."

"We? Who? The club?"

"The chairman of the Citizens' Union is here. He ought to do it, and the rest of us—we—I suppose we can subscribe to it, too," said the editor, with a glance at Consul Wahl.

"The whole town protests. We sign in the name of the whole town!" answered the consul, nodding and gesticulating, his face flushed with excitement.

At that moment a quiet voice was heard near the window. It was Halvorsen, a gray-haired merchant, who was at last able to make himself heard.

"But," he said, "isn't Dr. Mark considered to be a clever doctor?"

There was a pause.

"And what if he is?" said the editor, who was still standing upon the chair.

"Well, I thought that was the main point," replied Halvorsen.

The next moment all eyes were turned to Dr. Prahl, who felt that he ought to say something.

"Well, I don't know what he is!" he said. "But does any one here believe that that's the reason why he gets it over the heads of the fifteen other candidates that are older than he?"

The editor looked round. "I should just like to mention," he said, "that both the temperance people and the socialists are getting ready to meet him at the quay."

"Then that'll save the rest of us from having to do it," said Dr. Kemp, biting his lip as he slipped out of the room.

"We shall have the municipal elections in the autumn," the editor continued, "and now

the socialists will have a leader who is accustomed to pay suit to low instincts. I think I can prophesy that things will be quite changed here, and the question is whether there isn't still time to avert the calamity if we act immediately."

"We'll telegraph!" cried several voices. "Here's paper and pen!" And the buzzing began again worse than before.

The next day the town had something to talk about. The socialist paper stated that the total abstinence and labor parties had also sent a telegram to the Government on this subject, so that people in the capital should not mistake five or six club-members, a little the worse for drink, for the town itself.

There was only a couple of weeks to the time when the new doctor was to enter on his duties, and in the meantime the town talked itself into a state of ever greater excitement. One large section considered this appointment to be an insult to the town; others—his party friends—looked upon the doctor as a martyr,

and were beginning to make arrangements for singing and flowers.

No one in the town could say that he was personally acquainted with Harold Mark. He had made short holiday visits, when mother and son generally went away together to the sea or to the mountains; but a few of his opinions were known, and people formed their idea of him from what they read in the papers with additions from their own imagination, until at last it seemed to most of them that they had really known him well for many years.

In the lengthening spring evenings, Fru Mark was now often seen on her knees in her little garden tending her flowers. The house was repainted, too, and shone whiter than ever. "She's making everything look nice for his coming"—people said as they passed.

One Sunday evening in the middle of May the large Bergen steamer was making her way into the bay. The whole town was on the quay, a white straw hat or a red sunshade showing here and there above the dense wall of people.

"Here comes Fru Mark driving!" said some one in the crowd, and people tried to squeeze up and make room. The brown horse ploughed its way slowly into the mass of human beings. The white-haired woman in the carriage looked reserved and cold. Perhaps she was afraid of what might happen when her son stepped on shore.

Nearer the warehouses stood the schoolmaster, Brede, with the labor union under their banner; and the red-bearded man dashed hither and thither, perspiring with zeal. "Off with you, youngsters!" he cried as he took off his silk hat with a flourish to Fru Mark. He then darted lightning glances over the well-dressed crowd. He was going to see to the whole arrangement, the women and the men, the cheers and the singing, and, in addition, make a speech himself; so it was not much wonder that he was running hither and thither. It was easy enough for Holmsen, the customs officer, who was standing near with the total abstinence people. He could stand about with

nothing to do but watch the steamer come in, and join in the cheering.

The vessel lay to. A band was playing on board. The gangway was raised, and people began to stream ashore. All eyes were looking for one particular passenger, but where was he? The gangway was dropped again, and the steamer moved from the quay. The schoolmaster and the customs officer looked across at one another open-mouthed. What had become of the doctor?

"I know nothing!" said Fru Mark, making the horse back and turn. "He may have been delayed in Bergen."

Disappointed and crestfallen, the crowd went home again. When Fru Mark arrived at her house, she found a motor-car standing at the door, and a man with a fair beard was in the act of paying the chauffeur. It was Harold.

"Good morning, mother! Have you bought yourself a horse?" he asked, as he came and helped her out of the carriage.

"My dear, where have you come from?" she stammered, letting him kiss her.

"Well, you see, I heard a rumor that a crows' parliament was being held over my remains, so I went ashore at Taraldsund and came by road. Thank goodness! I'm here at last!" he exclaimed, taking off his hat and looking about him.

"Good Lord, what's that hideous thing you've put up there?" he asked, as his gaze fell upon a large, brown, brick building that rose above the cluster of houses. "What is it?"

"That's the parish school," said his mother, looking at him anxiously.

"I hope you haven't had anything to do with the building of that frightful thing, mother?"

"No, I wasn't the architect," she said. "But let's go in. The maid can carry up your things."

"And what's that out by the bay?" he questioned further, as he looked at a large, yellow, wooden building at the other end of the town.

"That's the new hospital."

“My hospital?”

“I suppose we may call it so,” she said with a smile. “Hadn’t they begun to build it when you were here last?”

“Built of wood—in these days! That was foolish!”

He took his large portmanteau and followed his mother through the garden gate and up the steps to the white house on the rock. He was soon wandering about the small rooms, which seemed filled with the scent of the sea. It was all so open and full of light. A peculiar feeling of comfort overwhelmed him now that he was once more under his mother’s roof. How long it was since he had been with any one who was bound to him by any tie!

“Welcome home, my dear boy!” said his mother, as she went and laid her hands upon his shoulders.

“Thank you, mother, thank you!” he said; and they stood thus for a moment, his smile answering hers as their eyes met. These two, who for so many years had talked together

only in letters, were now standing so close that they could hear one another breathe.

"You're actually beginning to get gray hairs!" she said, pulling his beard a little.

"So are you, mother!"

"What nonsense! Why, I'm old! . . . But come upstairs and let me see whether you're satisfied with your two rooms."

The stairs creaked under their feet. The elderly, red-haired maid was already up there, and had placed his trunks on two chairs. "Why, isn't that Lisbeth?" he exclaimed. "Good day, Lisbeth! So you're still here?"

"Good day, sir!" said Lisbeth, flushing, as he shook hands with her.

When she had gone, the mother and son were alone again. He was standing at the open window in the bedroom, looking out. The bay lay like a mirror, and reflected the mountains and farms on the other side. A waterfall hung like a silver thread from the top of a precipice, and at last splashed into the sea. The fruit-trees were loaded with

blossom. It was wonderful to breathe this air, and he drew deep breaths.

"And I am here now!" he thought. "I am always thinking I've taken root in some firm thing, now in a great passion, now in a great work; but the roots are always pulled up. How will it be now?"

It was beautiful out there, but he looked at it without seeing it, because a multitude of images flitted through his mind and drew a veil between him and the objects on which his eyes rested. He must learn now to tear this veil asunder.

"How are you now?" said his mother, coming up and taking his arm.

He turned towards her. "I?" he said. "Oh, grand! And how are you? I'm so glad to see you looking so well," he added, patting her cheek.

"Do you think this bed will do for you?"

He could not help laughing. As if it mattered in the least whether he lay on a hard or a soft bed!

"I say, mother—about that stupid letter I

wrote you. You must promise me you won't think any more about it."

She had sat down and was drawing her forefinger over the surface of a white table, on which stood a brass candlestick.

"That letter was really one long accusation against me," she said, avoiding his eye.

"What? Against you?"

She nodded. "It's I, of course, who am responsible for your life taking such a direction. And there's little comfort in the thought that I meant well."

"Now, mother, we two are only going to think of how happy and jolly we shall be together now. Tell me—do they dance much here?"

She stared in astonishment. "What? Dance?"

"Yes, of course! There must be young people here who do something more sensible than shout hurrah for stupid prophets. I shall found a dancing-club, if there isn't one already. I have some fun to the good that I

must make up for." And he whistled as he swung round on the floor.

"How forced it all sounds!" thought his mother, not daring to look at him. He had gone to the window again, and stood looking out and humming.

"There's one thing I should like to know," she said at last. "Do you never hear from—from Paris?"

He looked at her and smiled, but then passed his hand across his forehead and bowed his head.

"No," he said; "but I know they still live in Paris."

"They? Whom do you mean?"

"Thora and her husband. She—she's married a French artist now."

His mother's mouth grew hard. There was a pause.

"She must not be blamed for it at any rate," he said, raising his head. "The fault was mine. If a man can't be what a young, light-hearted girl has the right to expect him to be, he shouldn't marry."

There was another pause, and then his mother said: "Why did you apply to come here, Harold?"

"Why? Why, mother dear, I'd made myself quite impossible down there!"

"Oh, nonsense! You're not a coward. You wouldn't run away."

"No, I suppose I shouldn't," he said in a low voice, turning to the window. "But I needed to look out upon different surroundings. There are a few things that I must try and understand now. So many of my ideals have been shattered, and I don't know how I'm to put them together again. But we won't talk any more about that," he said, in a different tone, turning to her.

They went down, and had only been in the sitting-room a moment when a dark, slender woman, dressed in a brown velvet dress with a white lace collar over her shoulders, entered the room. Her pale, oval face was framed by dark hair, which was gathered into a knot at the back of her head. Her eyes were large and dark, with luminous depths. Round her

neck she wore a band of brown velvet, from which hung a gold locket. She might have been thirty or even forty, but any one looking at her did not think about her age, but only that there was an individuality about her, and that she was beautiful.

"This is Alma Kahrs," said Fru Mark, introducing her. "She is senior sister at your hospital, but latterly she has lived here with me."

Harold looked surprised. "I thought a senior sister lived in the hospital," he said, smiling.

"No, there is so little room to spare there," she replied, "and besides there's another senior sister who lives there. But if the new senior physician requires me to move out there at once, there's no help for it!" she added rather roguishly.

"Well, we can see about that when I've looked into things a little," he said, shaking hands with her.

"I suppose I'd better make the tea," she said, and left the room. When she was gone, Fru Mark explained that Sister Alma's father

had been the greatest wholesale fish-merchant in the town, and had gone bankrupt two or three years ago. At that time she had been engaged to a lawyer, who, when she became a poor girl, immediately broke off the engagement.

"And so she took to sick-nursing," said Harold, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, poor thing. And now she is pretty well over it. I'm sure you'll appreciate and like her."

"It's of very little consequence whom I like, mother." His first thought on seeing Sister Alma had been: "She's some one mother's got hold of to console me. Poor mother!"

It was a dainty little supper-table that awaited them. Harold was accustomed to the bad management of his elderly servant, and to have his meals alone. Here the cloth was so white, the cups and plates so pretty, there were flowers from the garden, and everything was so bright and cheerful. The evening sun filled the room with golden light and shadows, and through the open window came the cry of

the gulls. Harold ate quickly and told amusing stories, but laughed so loudly that his mother often looked at him in astonishment. How he had changed!

"I suppose you're looking forward to starting work at your new post, Dr. Mark?" said Sister Alma.

"Looking forward?" he said slowly, putting down his cup.

"Yes, for a doctor can do such a tremendous amount of good."

"I'll tell you what, sister,—a doctor oughtn't to set about saving the life of a single smith or tailor; for even if he gets well today, he's bound to die tomorrow. What good has the doctor done then? Now if he could get the better of a disease, so that it never appeared again, it would be a different matter. But you know quite well that if we drive it out of Tom today, it breaks out in Dick tomorrow, or in a million other people all over the world. Have we doctors then really done anything worth bragging about?"

"But, dear me! looked at in that way, every-

thing becomes pretty hopeless!" said Sister Alma, looking earnestly at him.

"And so it is!" he replied, laughing. "Everything is really hopeless."

"Oh, don't listen to him!" said his mother. "He doesn't mean it."

"Yes, I think that we doctors must do the same as you others, namely, take care to be so busy that you haven't time to think. . . . But I say, mother, won't you really celebrate your son's homecoming with a glass of wine?"

Both women looked at him in astonishment, and finally smiled.

"You're a nice total abstainer!" said his mother at last.

"It's a good thing you reminded me of it, mother!" he replied. "Fancy, sister! there's a religious sect here that maintains that it's better to ruin your stomach and nerves with coffee than rejoice your heart with a glass of white wine. And do you know who was the archbishop of that religious community for a couple of years in this country? Well, it was I!"

Again the two women looked at one another and tried to laugh.

As he handed in his cup for his mother to fill, he went on: "Isn't it strange, sister, that some of us should be born to be charwomen?"

"Born to be what?"

"To be charwomen," he said, putting sugar into his tea. "We go about with a pail and try to wash away the dirt that others have made. That's called working for progress. But if the charwoman has scrubbed it all clean today, it'll be just as bad again tomorrow, while she, poor thing, thought the floors would lie there spotless for hundreds of years."

Fru Mark bent her head over her plate. This had quite ceased to be amusing.

After supper it came to light that Sister Alma could play, and Harold went to the piano, selected some music, and saw her seated on the music-stool. Fru Mark sat on the sofa, looking before her with her hands in her lap; but was it the music she was listening to?

The last rays of the setting sun were lighting up the room and shining on the old ma-

hogany sofa and on Fru Mark's long, blue-veined hands; but her face was in shadow. She looked at the two over by the window. Harold was leaning against the piano, looking still so broad-shouldered and handsome, and the color of his blue serge suit harmonising well with his companion's brown velvet. What was she playing? Fru Mark only saw that as Harold bent forward, his fair hair was touched by a golden ray from the sun; and at the same time she thought of his lacerated mind.

And she thought she had done some good in the world! Had he now come as her judge? How would it all end?

IX

HAROLD had said good-night to the ladies, and now, putting on a light overcoat, and taking the latchkey with him, he went out. He wanted a walk alone before he went to bed.

He went along the road by the shore and its continuation inland. It was nearly midnight, and the mountains and the bay lay in a bluish darkness, through which shone the red and green harbor-lights. A gentle breeze had sprung up on the water, and little waves kept breaking on the shore—a monotonous and melancholy nocturnal melody, repeated over and over again interminably. The town was asleep, and most of the lights in the bay were extinguished.

Harold sat down on a stone by the wayside, lighted a cigar, and rested both hands on the handle of his stick. What had been his intention in coming here? His mother might well ask. No, it was not only to get away

from the sight of enemies at every corner, or to escape the sympathy of stupid members of his own party. That was not the reason. He must have hoped to find an out-of-the-way place where the world might be smaller. He knew his disease now, for this feeling, that all misfortunes all the wide world over concerned him, was a disease; this huge world-responsibility, the weal and woe of mankind, was a disease. It must be shaken off. "This ubiquitousness in my thoughts"—he said to himself—"so that I cannot concentrate on anything close at hand, is sheer idiocy. I once thought of serving my time and becoming free, and now the time has come. I am free, and I must use my freedom and become young and happy again. There are beautiful districts in Norway where I can go and drink in the beauty, and let it live in my mind. And no newspaper-reading! The papers report only catastrophes; they overfeed us with sad things. Our power of feeling pleasure will soon become a rudimentary organ. Millions of people are healthy and happy, and don't

care a hang for social defects and progress. Learn to know some of them"—he exhorted himself. "In that way you can re-form your picture of the world. It's not so bloody and dirty as you've been imagining. You've only seen the ink that the newspapers use, and there's a face behind it that's beautiful and healthy. Try to get in to it! That's where you have to get! That's where you have to get!"

He looked out through the blue-gray darkness which seemed to be a mixture of dusk and dawn. On the sea-horizon there was a streak of red in the sky. Harold looked at it, and at the mountains and the sea; but he still felt that he could not quite take it in, because irrelevant thoughts once more drew a veil across his eyes.

He went on at a quick pace. Suddenly he heard a peculiar sound, and stopped. Yes, it was dance-music—a concertina. He went on, and, rounding a little headland, he found himself by a small pilot-boat harbor, where a number of young people were dancing on the

grass and the road, in front of a white house. He could see light dresses in the half-darkness.

The player, a young sailor with his cap on the back of his head, was sitting on a stone and had his pipe in one corner of his mouth. Harold gave them the usual greeting and remembered that he himself was only thirty-eight. He then went among them and said who he was, offered cigars to the boys, and begged them to go on with the fun. Perhaps he might be allowed to dance, too?

The concertina stopped for a moment, and they all looked at him. One or two of the girls said quietly that they must be going home, but after all the party did not break up, and the concertina began again. Harold went up to a girl in a light dress and straw hat, and asked for a dance, and drawing her to him began to dance; and in a little while they were all dancing.

Ah, it was long since he had had his arm round a girl's waist, or felt a girl's breath against his cheek! It made him so delight-

fully giddy, and he stopped for a moment to throw off his overcoat.

"You dance splendidly," he said. "What's your name?"

"Petra."

"And is your father a fisherman out here?"

"No, he's a pilot."

A light was still burning in a white house where there was a kind of café, and it ended by Harold asking them all in and treating them to coffee and cakes.

It was two o'clock, and daylight was already beginning to appear, and the snow on the mountains to be tinged with gold. Harold told stories and made them all laugh; and finally they went out again, and had one more dance on the grass.

It was not until four o'clock that Harold turned back towards the town, and as he went he could not help laughing now and then.

"Her name was Petra, and she had black hair, and looked at me out of the corner of her eye," he said to himself; "but I didn't manage to see her home. Old fool! Are you

beginning to shuffle along in the rear-guard? Well, one may be as good as another. Petra! Twenty!" He stopped, pushed back his hat, and looked aimlessly for the sun, as if they two ought to be joining company; but as yet only the snowy peaks were aflame, the clouds were golden, and the bay lay once more reflecting a rosy sky, blue mountains and green shore, while the flocks of white gulls under the land lay rocking in the blue shadows.

Harold leaned upon his stick and tried to take it all in, to forget the unsuccessful rising in Barcelona, and to look at the morning, and only that, and to think, for instance, of young Petra. There must be pretty girls in the town. A boat on the bay some June evening, she and he, she and he, rocking on the tiny waves, and perhaps going out to an island. Would that happen to him, he wondered? One thing was necessary—to make his horizon small, to turn down the light in those regions of his consciousness that did not concern him, to sleep, to let his mind sleep. The more wide-awake and far-seeing he was, the sooner

would his hair turn gray, and his laughter die away. He ought to make his surrounding world small. His mother was wise. She improved the parish schools in the town, and believed that mankind had thereby made a great step forward. That was wisdom. His mother kept her good looks. All honor to the happy people with a small horizon, with blinds down towards the world and the great sea, and the windows open to a tiny garden. That is where he must go! Ah! how beautiful it was here! He would be at peace here!

A feeling of sincere humility filled his mind. Many things that he had overlooked for years now came and presented themselves. A pair of early starlings were running about, busy over their new nest-building. "Those are starlings," he said aloud. And was not that a lark he heard right over his head? He whistled up into the air. Then he noticed that the grass running down to the water was yellow with the flowers of the rock-rose. The meadow was covered with dew and bathed in the rosy light. He picked a dandelion from the way-

side. "You hardy brigand!" he said, "that all the world is in pursuit of—you are a little sun on earth all the same. You shall sit in my buttonhole. And now we'll go!"

He slept with his window open. Peace, peace! He lay between his mother's sheets, and felt in his whole body that they were clean and nice. Through the open window came the sound of the waves breaking upon the beach or against the ships in the harbor. The blind blew out into the room. He was aware of it all, but only turned over and went on sleeping. The room became filled with golden light, with full, flaming daylight; but he had not to go anywhere; he was free, and he slept on and on.

At last he felt there was some one in the room. Must he go to another patient? He started up, but it was only the maid with a large coffee-tray.

"Goodness, Lisbeth! is anything the matter?"

"No, sir; but I was to say from the mistress that she had to go down to the school, as the

examinations are on, but she would be back by one o'clock."

"And what time is it now?"

"Oh, it's scarcely more than twelve now."

"Oh, dear! and I meant to go on sleeping for hours! Thanks, Lisbeth, all the same."

He still lay for a little while outstretched with his hands clasped behind his head, in a feeling of utter well-being. Thank goodness! there were still three days before he was to enter on his duties. For three mornings he could wake with the feeling that every hour of the day was his own. For the moment it seemed like a great event; he was so comfortable now! Everything in the room looked at him in a friendly way, and seemed to welcome him home. There were flowers from his mother's garden in a vase on the table, and this afternoon he and she could go for a long walk, and talk as they used to do in old days. No patients, no societies to trouble about! Free! Gentle forces seemed to enter his mind. He no longer trembled with the continual hammering of the surrounding world upon it; he

was just himself. And he looked down into this self, and it was like a little edifice filled with the sound of soft bells. Yes, this was himself. There was a little chapel deep down in his being, which had hitherto been hidden by dust-clouds from the noisy, every-day world; but now he could see it. The Easter bells were ringing down there. After all, there was something divine in him, too, and it only needed quiet to unfold freely. Yes, this was himself! This was himself!

Ah, how good it was to be alive!

When he came downstairs, the rooms were filled with sunshine, and yet—what was the matter? He stood looking at the breakfast-table; it seemed to him something was wanting. He sat down, and everything tasted delicious; but—what was the matter? Ah, it was the morning papers! Nonsense! What did he care about them? But after breakfast, when he had lighted his pipe, he nevertheless went out into the kitchen for them. Lisbeth told him that the papers came out in the evening here. Oh, hang it! He began to walk

up and down the room, and laughed at himself; and yet he felt there was something wanting. It was as though a great part of him had had no breakfast. He noticed a peculiar hunger to know what had happened during the last few days all over the world. The beautiful life that he had felt awaken in him a little while ago, was in a moment eaten up, as it were, by another being that was also himself. He went out, put on his hat and coat, and sauntered out again along the road by the bay; but this time he saw nothing of the scenery, and had no thought for the dandelion, the little sun upon earth. In large towns people were now sitting and drinking in the immense world-life from their morning papers. He would have to wait until the evening, and perhaps there wasn't much in the little rags here either. The post from the capital did not come in until tomorrow. He had only screwed his restlessness back twenty-four hours. What would come tomorrow? That was what he would have to wait for every day all the year round. How would he be able to manage it?

It was as if an enormous wave in retreating had once more got hold of him and drawn him down. "Even if you hide yourself in the innermost corner"—it said—"I shall find you and drag you out again. You belong to the ocean; and now you no longer have any party, any rudder, or any course. You must drift hither and thither, but do you think you can shut yourself out from the great world-feeling? You? Close your eyes! Learn to know yourself! What are you in reality? Was not all you felt this morning only deception? You are nothing after all but an echo of the wide world!"

Harold drew his hat down over his eyes, and walked slowly on along the shore.

X

LAWYER GUNDAHL was always busy. When he came bustling along with his portfolio under his arm, he looked as if he were going everywhere at once. It was not exactly that he was so overwhelmed with work, but there was so much in his head, and he had so many people to speak to, and so much that he intended to speak about later on. He knew all the men in the little town so well that he never took off his hat to any of them except the magistrate; he only waved his hand in greeting or farewell, said a couple of words here and a couple there, and bustled on, always busy. If a new kind of shirt appeared in a shop-window, or a new book at a bookseller's, he might stop and adjust his spectacles to see what it was. The world had been unjust to Lawyer Gundahl. He was so small when he was born, that he could lie in a cigar-box; and people teased him by saying that he would

still find room enough in a cradle. His hands were so withered that people shrank from touching them, his nose was flat, and his eyes half blind. What caustic speeches he had had to listen to, and how much he had to revenge! Women avoided him wherever he went, and he revenged himself by constantly stopping them in the street to play the gallant and talk to them of love. The men did not take much notice of him either, although he was the only member of the legal profession in the town who had taken a first in his final examination, and the only one who had been in Paris, and who was something of a singer. He was kept out of every kind of election, and only such cases came to his office as his colleagues shrank from having anything to do with. Well, the world made grimaces at Lawyer Gundahl, and once it had hurt him; but now it had ceased to do so, and he revenged himself by making grimaces back. He had a lively, peppery temperament, said smart things about his neighbor, and rubbed his withered hands in glee when the world also treated others un-

kindly. Why not? Every one is the better for a little salt and vinegar. Had not he himself suffered from disappointed affection, and written poems about nymphs and princesses, and dreamed dreams worthy of a Byron? And yet it ended by his marrying his cook. Well, his house was kept clean and his money saved; but the woman herself? Beauty? Intellect? Oh, no! but she drank coffee and gossiped about the other married women, who imagined they were finer than she; but the worst of it was that she gradually expanded and became a perfect mountain. Lawyer Gundahl did not find all this very pleasant, but he put up with it, and his laughter only became shriller when misfortune befell others. Passers-by often heard scolding in his house, but at other times the couple would sit holding one another's hands and looking amorously at one another; but this was when some scandal had occurred in the town, which gave them the opportunity of speaking evil of some one else.

On this occasion Fru Gundahl was sitting knitting behind her window-plants, while she

waited for her husband to come in to dinner. Her round face was red, her eyes were prominent, and her bosom projected far beyond her double chin. She had just prepared herself to give little Paul a lecture; for the night before he had come home from the club in such a condition that there was no use in speaking to him then.

That was his quick little step! He hung up his coat and hat in the passage, and when, as usual, he put in his head and took a general survey of the room through his spectacles, he caught sight of his wife, and exclaimed: "My word, Emma! you can believe there's news today!"

"News?" and Fru Gundahl dropped her knitting into her lap, but gave her husband a look which said: "Don't imagine you'll put me off so easily!"

Gundahl came in, went into the dining-room where his writing-table stood, and threw down his portfolio. He then stood in the doorway between the two rooms, and compared his

watch with the clock in the drawing-room, and finally came in and continued:

"First of all it's the new doctor. What did I say? What did we all say? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has he already made himself impossible?" asked Fru Gundahl without much interest.

"I don't know what you'll think, but he was out the very first evening on the hunt for girls out by the pilot-harbor. I only hope to goodness he'll go on with it! It's fine! And, moreover, he's veered right round in his politics. His working-men and total abstainers aren't fine enough for him out here in the west, it seems. He's refused to let them have a torchlight procession in his honor. They're not even to go and give him a single cheer. And now they're in a rage, and, by Jove, they'll be going some day and hooting him! That sort of people generally make short work of fallen angels."

"You were late in coming home last night!" said Fru Gundahl as she rose.

"But the best's still to come!" said Gundahl, rubbing his hands, and appearing as if

he had not heard his wife's remark. "Fru Harrang, you know—well, now we shall have fun in good earnest."

"Fru Harrang? What about her?"

"Fru Harrang will be playing the part of Cleopatra again."

"What? Is there anything new now?" Fru Gundahl was more interested.

"No, on the contrary, it's the old story. Ivar Holth came here today!"

"What? No, really——! Here? Ivar Holth? Straight from prison then!"

"He landed from the Bergen boat today," said Gundahl, trotting delightedly backwards and forwards; for now his wife had got so much to occupy her, that she would forget that trifling matter concerning himself.

"And what is he going to do here now?" she exclaimed, gazing at her husband in utter consternation.

"That I can probably find out for you a little later in the day. But that we shall have some fun again, that—he, he, he!" He was rubbing his hands all the time, and at last had

the temerity to lay his arm across his wife's broad shoulders, and ask ingratiatingly whether dinner would not soon be ready.

"But what's the man to make a living by now?" she asked, continuing her train of thought. "And she—a naval officer's wife! She ought surely to have some sense of shame!"

"It's not written anywhere in the stars that we're to have a sense of shame, little wife," said Gundahl, shaking his head.

"How did he look?"

"Flourishing, my dear. He looked simply splendid!"

Fru Gundahl suddenly decided that today her husband would be the better for a dram with his food; and as they sat at dinner, both their faces shone with mutual kindness, because they now had something outside their own home with which to occupy themselves.

Ivar Holth's history was quite an ordinary history. He had come in from the country as a boy, and had gradually worked himself up to the position of head-clerk in Randers &

Son's office. He was an industrious young man, who sat up at night and studied, the first year languages and commercial science, afterwards philosophical works. Latterly he had lived with his sister, a young widow with several children. He provided for this family as if it were his own, and the years had passed by without his having thought of marrying.

But then chance brought him his fate.

Captain Harrang had come to the town as principal of the Seamen's School, and he brought with him a young and unusually beautiful wife.

Ivar Holth danced with her at the club ball at Christmas. He held this slender, dark-haired girl in a white silk dress, in his arms. She talked to him, looked at him, smiled at him, and encouraged him when she saw how strangely he began to behave. Her delicately flushed face and dark eyelashes were so near his own face. Afterwards he talked to her of Schopenhauer, and she said: "Fancy! Are you really so learned?" And he conversed with his partner about Newcastle, where he

had spent six months in an office, and she still said: "Fancy! Have you been there, too?" He amused her immensely; and when, late that night, he stumbled homewards, he stopped to look up at the stars and ask them whether there was any meaning in life.

In the days that followed he was another being. He sat writing poems in office-hours, and when his principal asked him about something, his answer was such as to make the old gentleman put on his spectacles in order to observe him more closely.

The naval officer was an ardent card-player, and in the club Ivar Holth was fortunate enough to be at his table. He lost willingly, gladly allowed himself to be fleeced, but attained his purpose, namely, to be asked to spend an evening at the captain's house. At last he stood in those sacred rooms in which *she* moved about every day, every day. The young wife was still kind to him. She had amused herself with so many young men, and this one was a new type. Before Ivar went home, he had received permission to go down

to the market and carry her parcels home. He did it that day and several other days. He got her to go with him to a confectioner's. He still amused her; and he had money, and her husband had nothing but debts.

"I say, Sigurd!" said old Randers, opening the door into the outer office one day, and looking over his glasses at his son; "where's the head-clerk today?"

Young Randers was sitting on his stool, looking fat and indolent. "We-ell," he said, "he's gone out."

"Don't you know where he is?" asked his father, with his red eyes still looking over his glasses.

"Well, yesterday I met him with a basket of lobsters for Fru Harrang, and today perhaps he's gone after salmon."

Old Randers blew his nose and said: "Very well. Will you ask him to come in to me when he makes his appearance again?"

Ivar Holth's love-affair became a disease. He, an industrious workman, a careful young man, who had hitherto taken no notice of

women, was carried away by a new element. He had saved up his youth so long that he was no longer able to control it. The town began to talk about Fru Harrang and him. Let them! He heard that Fru Harrang herself made fun of him. Let her! Would he end it then? He lay awake at night and composed terrible farewell letters; but it all ended in his sending her flowers. He kept on letting her husband fleece him at cards, and by degrees he became so easily contented that he felt these losses as little caresses from her. Then one day she said "No" to a walk, but he was allowed to send her cakes, and she still accepted flowers. Then he began sitting at night on the doorstep of her house. It was a martyrdom that he voluntarily sought, and it became sweeter every time. He sat and looked at her bedroom window when it was lighted up. They were undressing now. And there! they had put out the light, and now they were alone together up there, those two, and he—he was sitting here! Now they were kissing each other, locked in a fast embrace.

It cut right through his heart, but he sat on. If he could not receive a single caress from her, he could at least sit here and be unhappy. He felt a desire to kill her husband, but instead went on losing money to him at cards, so that he might be invited once more. What would be the end of it? Holth no longer thought about that; he went about in a dazed condition, and was indifferent to everything and everybody except one.

One day he noticed, however, that the surrounding atmosphere began to be strangely sultry, as though a storm were approaching. People looked at him in a different way, and one evening, when he met Captain Harrang in the street, the latter stopped him and did not take off his hat or make the slightest sign of any intention to do so.

"I say!" he said. "No, it was not that I had any desire to shake hands with you. I only want to say that you must be so good as to leave my wife alone."

"What? I?" stammered Holth.

"You don't want to give me the trouble of thrashing you, do you? Good morning!"

Holth went on, knowing that he had now reached the limit. He had known it was bound to happen, but he had not wished to think about it, for he was determined, when the day came, to throw himself into the sea.

But he did not do it after all. He allowed the scandal to come. He let himself be arrested for forgery, bowed his head, and submitted to punishment. He had not wanted to reduce the allowance he made to his sister, and of late his other expenses had been great; and he had had such practice in writing "Randers & Son." And if it gained him several months in which to be unhappy, why should he not do it?

When he went away, he bade a final farewell to his sister, saying that when his sentence was over he would emigrate to South Africa; but when the time came, he could not do it. It would not be pleasant to appear again in the little town after having been in prison; and yet he came back.

It was a fair, spare man of about thirty who, with a bag in his hand, walked up from the quays towards the town. He wore a dark serge suit and a gray felt hat. He stooped, was clean-shaven and pale, and so thin that his cheek-bones and nose stood out sharply; but his eyes looked full of defiance. When he passed any one he had known well in former days, he looked at him, but made no sign of recognition. It was as if he said: "Yes, I know the whole town will trample on me now; but *she* lives here, so I'm coming, no matter what you say!"

Up at the foot of the hills, where the houses became small and scattered, he stopped at a garden gate, opened it, and went in towards the little yellow wooden house that stood behind blossoming lilac-bushes. Clothes were hanging to dry in the garden, little children's petticoats and tiny stockings on the line. Suddenly a little girl of about five came round a corner, and when she saw him, ran forward, crying: "Uncle Ivar! Have you come home after all? Mother, mother! It's Uncle Ivar!"

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In a moment the young man had lifted the child from the ground, and her two little arms were clasped about his neck.

A pale young woman in a dark cotton dress appeared at the door, and involuntarily put out a hand as if to steady herself.

“Ivar!”

The next moment she looked about her as if in fear of her neighbors; but the young man was still chatting with the little girl, and it was only after he had put her down that he approached his sister.

“Good morning, Inga!”

She was silent for a moment, and breathed heavily.

“You—you must come in,” she said softly, and drew him in by the hand, as if she wanted to hide him.

It was a small room, with plush chairs and a piano, and on the wall hung pictures of great German musicians. Ivar’s brother-in-law had been an organist and had also played the violin that now hung over the sofa between Wagner and Chopin.

The brother and sister stood a moment looking at one another.

"How are you all here?"

"Quite well, thank you. But you! Dear Ivar!" she said, taking both his hands in hers, her eyes filling with tears.

"Yes, I suppose I oughtn't to have come here, but——"

"Aren't you hungry? Will you have a cup of chocolate?" she asked, trying to get the better of her emotion.

"I'm afraid you have a cough, Inga!"

"Don't talk about me, but sit down. It won't be so very long before dinner is ready," she said; and making him sit down on the sofa, she hurried out. He heard her blowing her nose and knew that she had begun to cry.

So here he sat again in the little cottage that had been his home for several years, with its plants and ornaments and music and books. His brother-in-law had succumbed to a chest-disease, and after his death his wife had gone to the expense of having a large

portrait of him done, and this now hung on one wall by itself. The hollow-cheeked young man up there seemed to be looking down at him, Ivar, and saying: "You can't think how hard your sister has striven to keep things going while you've been away; but it's a peculiar kind of help you're bringing her now!"

Then the children came rushing in. The eldest girl, Grethe, was seven. She had just come from school, and headed the others. "Uncle! Is it true?" she cried, throwing her arms round his neck, while the little two-year-old boy crawled over the threshold, crying, "Uncle!" "Have you come back now from that long journey?" asked the little girl, as she kissed him and hid her face on his shoulder. And then they all began to talk at once.

They had dinner together as in the old days, and when the children were sent away, the brother and sister sat silent for a little while, looking out of the window.

"I suppose you've let out my room?" he said at last.

"No," she answered, drawing with her finger on the table.

"I suppose you—you won't want me as a lodger now, Inga?"

She did not answer at once, but bent her head, and her breath came quickly.

"I'm afraid it'll be difficult for you to be here in the town, Ivar."

"I know it will. And you will be ashamed to have me in your house now."

"You know quite well that it isn't that; but I'm afraid—well, that it'll be the same thing over again. It isn't good for you to be where she is."

He was silent for some time. "I ought, of course, to have gone and drowned myself," he said at last. "But it's you and yours I have to consider. No, I must try to begin again. If only I had something to do!"

"What have you thought of beginning now, Ivar?"

"If there's nothing else to be done, I sup-

pose I can be a dock-laborer or a driver. I've no reason to be proud now."

They sat in silence again for a little while.

"You've got a cough!" he said at last, as he had said once before.

"Oh, it's nothing to speak of."

He looked at the pale, young face beneath the brown hair. Her eyes looked weary with watching, and indeed she had had much to agitate her during the last few years.

"Have you managed without—without any assistance, Inga?"

She nodded, and at the same time coughed again.

"And you haven't suffered want?"

"No, but perhaps I've had to do rather too much. I'm pretty tired."

"Do you still do embroidery for that firm in Bergen?"

She nodded, but with a sigh. "I've done the cooking at parties too, and helped at different houses with the month's washing; but I'm not much good at that, for I get so tired."

Ivar's old room was made ready for him, and when he entered it again, a peculiar warm joy and peace streamed into his soul. At last he was at home! He undressed and went to bed, stretching himself on his old couch, and breathing so easily in the lilac-scented air that came through the open window.

His pale face had acquired a tinge of brown from the sea-air on his way home, but his closed eyes seemed to sink deeper and deeper into their sockets. Ah, it was months since he had really slept! His sister was washing up in the kitchen, and he loved the sound. The children were chattering in the garden, the flies buzzed, and he gently fell asleep, sinking into deep slumber and finding rest there. At last!

XI

ON the morning when Harold Mark was to take over the hospital, Sister Alma went about in a peculiar state of uneasiness. She had not forgotten how he mocked at his own profession the first day he was at home; but why then did he want to take so important a post? She felt as if she had something at stake, and as if she herself were more useless than before. When she had gone into the Red Cross she was crushed with suffering and robbed of all her dreams; and the life within the hospital-walls had brought her not only forgetfulness, but also cheerfulness. She was still young and pretty, and when she entered a ward, with a newly-awakened joy in living in her every movement, she seemed to spread sunshine around her, and brought smiles to the pale faces in the beds.

But she did not like to have to doubt what a doctor did. She could attend the worst

operations without moving a muscle, because she knew it was for the good of the patient; but she could not bear to think that a doctor doubted himself.

She worshiped Harold's mother. When the great catastrophe befell her home, and the town gossip was busy with its fallen members, it was Fru Mark who came and called; and afterwards, when she came back as sister, and her parents were dead, it was again Fru Mark who managed that the girl should live with her, so that she should not feel quite so lonely in her native town.

Many an evening the two women had sat and talked about the much-discussed doctor in Christiania, and Sister Alma had become infected with his mother's care for him; and she wanted things to go well with him now.

She had had a spring cleaning in her division, so that he should find everything in order, although perhaps he would take no notice of it at all.

The moment arrived. Harold went quickly up the stairs, accompanied by the assistant

physician, Dr. Ramm, a square-built man with a thick, brown moustache. It was to be a preliminary survey of the various wards, and Sister Alma and another nurse accompanied them in case they should be wanted.

"I think we'll look at the operating-room first," said Harold, and when they went in he stood in the middle of the room and looked about him.

"Oh!" he said at last. "So this is the operating-room. But I say, isn't there even a Röntgen apparatus here?"

Dr. Ramm shook his head. "There's been some talk about it," he said, "but we haven't got any farther."

"Then I think we'll telegraph to Berlin for it this evening," said Harold, nodding to Dr. Ramm. "Will you be so kind as to see to that?"

"Well," objected Dr. Ramm with a smile, "but the Department must first grant the money."

"I'll take the responsibility. There's a limit to everything. But wait a little. There'll

be several other things that we shall have to order in the same telegram."

Dr. Ramm bowed. The two sisters exchanged glances.

In going through one of the long passages Harold suddenly stopped.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "Here's a little organ! Who plays it?"

"I do," said Sister Alma.

"For the patients?"

"Of course."

"Hymns?"

She nodded. "Yes, hymns; and other things too."

"It's not bad medicine, that," he remarked, passing on.

When they had been over the whole group of buildings, Harold asked Sister Alma and Dr. Ramm to come with him into his room.

"The hospital is overcrowded," he said. "Those who don't die of disease or of our drugs, will die of the atmosphere in there. More room must be made."

"Well, but there *is* no more room!" said Dr. Ramm.

"Yes, there's the senior physician's house. I don't need to move in there; so this afternoon we shall have to take some of them over there. I've decided that the blue dining-room shall be your room, Sister Alma. Have you any objection to settling in there this evening?"

Sister Alma nodded. It was sad to have to leave Fru Mark, but at the same time she was glad that he was going into everything so thoroughly; and he spoke in a tone that made obedience a matter of course.

"Then about the provisioning!" he said, seating himself at the writing-table and passing his fingers through his beard. "It seems to me a most ridiculous arrangement that a hotel shall provide the food for the patients. And how can we have any check on it? But there could be a splendid kitchen down in the large basement. Where is the steward?"

"There is no steward," said Dr. Ramm.

Harold raised his eyebrows. "What!" he

exclaimed. "Well, it looks as if there'd be a few things to see to in the first few days. It's a good thing, however, to have something to do," he added with a sigh, as he looked towards the window.

When evening came, Sister Alma's few possessions had all been moved in, her bed made, and she herself was sitting by the window, looking down into the big garden. There were two or three cherry-trees in blossom down there; and beyond, the little gray waves of the bay were breaking on the beach. In the other direction, on the outskirts of the town, she could see the white house on the rocky knoll, where mother and son were now probably sitting at supper.

And now she was living here. The house was in one wing of the hospital, and on the right she could look into the courtyard and see the gray walls at the back of the building, and feel the melancholy hospital atmosphere. It was as though the great buildings themselves were ill; and in the wards there were rows and rows of beds containing outstretched

forms, several of them half dead. She was accustomed to it all, and yet, as she sat there, she felt alone, and knew that she would never have another home.

The telephone-bell rang, and she went to it and held the receiver to her ear.

"It's Dr. Mark. How are you, sister?"

"All right, thank you!"

"I just happened to think of something. I once bought a grand piano when I was in Christiania. You have plenty of room, haven't you? Wouldn't you like to have it down there?"

"Why, yes, of course I should! But it would be too bad to take it!"

"And then you can sit and play Beethoven's ninth symphony when things get too sad for you down there."

"Well, but don't you want it yourself?"

"I haven't room for it, and I don't want it either. Good-night, sister!"

The days came and went, and Sister Alma still found it difficult to understand this strange man. By the bedside of a patient he

was so professional and cold. It was only the disease and not the patient that he cared about; and in the milder cases he looked as if he were indescribably bored. But she had never seen a doctor so quiet when he stood at the operating-table; and when his assistant made a mistake he did not get angry, but would say with a kindly smile: "Don't be uneasy! It'll be all right, you'll see!"

A week after he had entered on his duties, he had operated on a case of very advanced cancer in an old woman. He did not go home that day to dinner as he generally did, for he did not want to leave the patient. Late that evening she died, and her old husband, a peasant from one of the islands, who had been sitting waiting all the time in an ante-room, was told of it, and went sadly down the stairs. Sister Alma was very tired that evening, and when at last she went to bed, only tossed from side to side, unable to sleep.

It was past midnight when she happened to see from her window that there was a

light in the dissecting-room. She put on her dressing-gown and went across, and on opening the door she saw the body of the old woman lying on the table and Dr. Mark in his white operating-coat, sitting by the open window, smoking a cigar. Sister Alma stood gazing in astonishment. Had he carried the body in himself and then stood here at this late hour, tired out after a fatiguing day, dissecting it in order to find out more about the old woman's disease? Behind him was the gray spring night, and through the open window she could see the bay and the mountains, and against them his profile with fair hair and beard, and dreamy eyes looking straight before him.

"Hullo!" he said, rising suddenly. "What do you want?"

"Do you need any help?"

"No, I've finished." He threw away his cigar, and turned again to the window. "I only wanted to see whether we'd made any mistake."

"But she was so old, and the disease was

so far advanced," she said, with an attempt at consolation.

"Well, that only means that she was too old for us, and the disease too far advanced for me to manage it; but that's poor consolation."

"Now, Dr. Mark, hadn't you better go home and go to bed?"

He looked at the dead body beneath the electric light, with its fallen-in mouth and straying locks of gray hair. "It's not the old woman that interests me so much," he said, "but the fact that we haven't got any farther yet. We smile at the medical men of a century ago, and in another hundred years others will be smiling at us. And every step onwards costs a number of lives and opens up new problems. Well, well, let's be glad that we're going to have strawberries and cream for dinner tomorrow. I don't know of any other consolation."

He changed into his usual jacket, nodded a good-night, and went out. She turned out the light, and in the passage stood for a

moment listening to his step as he descended the stairs. The old man that had lost his wife that day had gone away with a heavy step; but the doctor's step sounded so hopeless. The door banged, and the sound of his footstep died away in the silence of the night; but it sounded as if he did not know where to go.

The town was, by now, becoming accustomed to the sight of mother and son coming in together every morning from the white house. He went with her to the school, and then went on to the hospital. As soon as he was alone he could smile. Oh, if only he had her well-balanced mind, her self-esteem, her faith! Indeed even her anger only did good, for her enemies were not stronger than that they could be overcome, nor her world larger than that it was possible for the evil in it to be put right. She still lived on the liberal ideas that had been fought for thirty years before. To help her neighbor was everything to her; to feel a positive ray of light in her own soul was something to which she never gave

a thought. He considered it very touching, and yet they had been nearer to each other when they met in those long, confidential letters. They sat together in the evenings now, and he would say: "Are you all right, mother?" "Oh, yes!" she would answer; "but isn't there anything you would like, Harold?" He so often noticed that when he talked to her he was thinking all the time about quite different things; and many a time when she was talking about things that interested her, he found the greatest difficulty in paying attention to what she said, because this little town, which was everything to her, did not interest him in the slightest degree. Had he then become incapable of living in companionship with his mother? He had a home now, but how could he give his attention to it every day when his thoughts were roaming all over the world? Home? A bed, a table and a couple of chairs were enough for a man like him; to fix his mind on things within those four walls seemed a sheer impossibility to him now.

After he had left his mother at the school, he noticed the numerous faces that he met, and again he smiled involuntarily. He knew that he had been a great disappointment to the working-men, and at the outset he had been a bugbear to the others; but what did it matter to him? A man who has run through all the world's papers while he drinks his morning coffee is accompanied everywhere by a mirage of the great events in all countries, of stormy scenes in parliaments in all quarters of the globe, of strikes, rebellions, congresses, catastrophes, the whole world in huge glimpses. And it has one advantage, at any rate, namely, that he can put little things in their places. That one or another in this little nest did not like him was something that could really be borne.

One light June evening a large tourist steamer came up to the quay, and some of her passengers came ashore to look about them. The townspeople had gathered on the pier, and were standing staring at the strangers.

"Why, bless my soul! if that isn't Dr.

Mark!" exclaimed a man in a white cap, standing at the rail; and the next moment he had jumped on to the quay.

Harold was sauntering down dressed in a light suit and tan shoes, and now caught sight of the other. They shook hands heartily, laughed, and talked both together. The new-comer was an artist named Lammers, with whom Harold had drunk many a bottle of Bavarian beer at the Café de Versailles.

"But you can't have settled down in a con-founded hole like this, man?"

"Be quiet and don't speak evil of the town. This is a very large place. But do tell me how long you stayed down there after I left. Tell me the Paris news!"

They walked up and down arm in arm. Lammers had only returned from Paris in the spring, and now he spoke of new methods among artists, of the theatres, of little scandals in the Scandinavian colony. At last Harold could contain himself no longer, and said: "And—and my former wife, Madame Duparc, have you seen anything of her lately?"

His companion was a little embarrassed. "Oh, yes," he answered. "She turned up now and then in the old rendezvous with *le mari*. We were asked there to dinner one day too. She has a really beautiful home and two dear little children."

Harold had turned red, and was glad that at that moment the steamer's bell rang for the third time. "Good-bye! Good-bye!"

He stood watching the great ship as she steamed out across the bay in the yellow evening light, with a fan of waves behind her. A fresh, living breath of air from the great world had touched him.

"Thora!—And have you got two babies now?" He went slowly homewards with bowed head.

The weather changed to heavy rain for the next few days, and the wind swept in from the sea a storm of gray, dripping clouds, which hid the mountains and filled the town with a dreary gloom. The wind roared in the west, it howled in the rigging of the ships in the harbor, and in the street, when people

turned, their umbrellas were blown inside out. The old landing-stages on their mussel-covered piles creaked with the waves and the wind, and now and then the wind tore open a door in an upper story of a warehouse, and caused such a disturbance among the bins and coils of rope, the barrels and the cases, that the employés rushed about shouting and gesticulating.

The baker's cart, drawn by a dun fjord-horse, was going through the streets. The driver, a pale young man in sou'wester and oilskin coat, was Ivar Holth. The horse knew the houses at which it had to stop, and the man took in the bread and then went on. Ivar Holth had once begun here as errand-boy, and worked himself up to be head clerk; but now he had dropped down to the position of driver of a baker's cart, and, like the horse, he bowed his head to the storm and tried to make the best of it. There were one or two things that were not pleasant. His old club companions looked another way when they passed, and little boys sang songs about

him and called him Potemkin. The townspeople were frequent visitors at the picture-houses, but here they could see pictures for nothing in the street. Was it strange that all eyes looked at him as at a play?

He went to the back door in many houses, and more than one lady whose guest he had formerly been, opened their eyes in astonishment. "Why, dear me! aren't you——?" "How many loaves do you want today?" he would ask proudly, declining all sympathy.

He also went to the back door of Captain Harrang's house, where the maid was the same that had waited upon him at table when he was a guest at the house, and now treated him rather differently. "I wonder if I shall see Fru Harrang today?" he would often think; but Fru Harrang was never in the kitchen, although he often had a feeling that she was somewhere near, looking at him while she herself was unseen. He always tried to pick out the best loaves for this house, and it was such a pleasure to him to stand for a moment at the dresser where she

probably often stood and busied herself in some way or other.

He was in the same town as she, and he even went into her kitchen, which was a pleasure. And everything else he had known in advance. He felt as if the whole town were tramping over his body so that it was broken, sore and crushed; but at last that too ceased to hurt him.

Every Saturday he took his week's wages home to his sister, who often accepted them with tears in her eyes. "But what about you?" she would say.

"I? I don't need anything."

"But I can't take all you earn, Ivar!" "It's not even enough for board and lodging," he would say. "If only you would leave off coughing like that!"

But every evening when he changed into his best clothes, she grew uneasy. "Where are you going, Ivar?"

"Oh, just for a little walk."

She would sit and wait, as anxious as if he had become a reveler. It might be past mid-

night again before he returned, and she was afraid he had gone back to his old ways. It was almost worse than if he drank, for drink would not, at any rate, so certainly lead him into misfortune again.

When Holth went out, he always thought of going in quite another direction in the town, or indeed, far, far out into the country; but it always ended in his finding himself outside Captain Harrang's house late at night. It was a two-story house with its main entrance in a small side street where there were seldom any passers-by late in the evening.

So he began standing there again, looking up at one particular window. The nights were too light now to need a light up there, but he knew the window from former times; and, within it, were she and that other! He went and sat down on the steps again with bent head, and began to tremble with the same sufferings as of old.

He would sometimes raise his head and try to collect his thoughts. He remembered his sister. He ought to go home. He remem-

bered his father, the old parish clerk out at Asköen, who had never shown himself in the town since his son had gone wrong. And, in old days, when any one from his old home had met him in the street, he had taken off his cap and was proud that one of themselves had risen so high. Now most of them passed him by without knowing him. All this was not pleasant, but there was no help for it. He sat now beneath her window, tearing his heart up into little bleeding fibres. He hoped for nothing. Sometimes people passed and laughed at him; he was the laughing-stock of the town, but there was no help for it. There was no help for it.

The next evening he, once more, intended to go far out of the town, but came to anchor here again.

She will be in bed now, perhaps with the clothes drawn right up to her chin; but her hair is let down and is lying in dark waves over her pillow. Her breathing—those long, light breaths—he can actually hear them; he notices the fragrance of her beautiful young

body, and can see her bosom rise and fall beneath her white nightdress.

And then—then her husband will come, and he will take her in his arms; and Ivar Holth feels the perspiration break out, and he clenches his fists and gasps for breath. “O God! O God! keep me from going mad!”

He was sitting thus one evening when he was aroused by a footstep. A thickset man was approaching. He was in uniform and wore a white cap, and his buttons glittered. It was Captain Harrang; but he walked unsteadily and must have come from the club or a party.

Holth rose and tried to slip away, but it was too late. The unsteady man was already in front of him; his face was red, and he smelt of tobacco and whiskey.

“Good evening!” said Holth, touching his hat.

“Now I’ve just got one thing to say to you, Mr.—Mr. Baker’s-man! If I ever find you again—no, wait! I’ve not finished!” said the captain, seizing Ivar by the collar.

“Let me go!”

“I’ll teach you to go! Do you know that you’re making me and my wife ridiculous all over the town?”

“Let go, confound you! I’ll never show myself here again. Oh, you’re scratching me, I say!” Ivar set his teeth, and tried to push his assailant away.

“What! You dare to touch me? You dare to push me? You? I’ll teach you once for all not to lie like a dog outside my house!” And as he spoke he gave Ivar a blow on the side of the head.

Before he knew what he was about, Ivar had returned the blow. The repressed desire of years to throw himself upon this man now broke loose. He hit, kicked, was hit and kicked again, tumbled about in the road, fell, but sprang up again, was thrown against the wall, but the next moment had sprung upon the other, who was as furious as himself.

Neither of them saw that a window in the first floor opened. Neither of them heard a woman call. Other windows opened in houses

round, and people in night-attire appeared at them. The captain had lost his cap and a cuff. At this moment he retreated a couple of steps to get a run, but his blow missed its aim, and instead a fist was planted in his eye, and he fell to the ground.

At that moment the police arrived; but only Holth was taken into custody.

At home in the cottage at the foot of the hills his sister lay and waited for him. The clock struck three and it struck four. What had happened to Ivar?

XII

WHEN for once something really happens in a little town, it sends a shock through old and young. The wives drink still more coffee, the husbands are obliged to go into the town; and the groups of men stand at all the corners, gesticulating.

Dr. Prah! was a highly-esteemed man. He had been in England two or three times, he kept a large motor-boat, he bought paintings, and got his claret direct from Bordeaux. He was now standing outside the bank, shaking his stick at Dr. Kemp, and saying that abroad, in Germany, for instance, Captain Harrang would have had to leave the navy immediately after such a scandalous affair. "Don't you agree with me?" he asked.

"But what about the other then?" said Kemp with a smile, stepping aside to avoid the stick.

"The other! A monomaniac! In my opin-

ion he's a person with inherited failings, whom Lombroso would have shut up on the testimony of his face alone. Just you wait! He'll do still worse things, you'll see!"

"But he'll be sentenced pretty severely now, since he's been in prison once before."

"Sentenced! Are you so innocent as to think that he'll be sentenced? No, in the present day you can kill people outright and still strut about and shake hands with the authorities. Sentenced! No! In the autumn they'll elect him a member of the Municipal Board, you'll see. Wait and see if I'm not right! Good morning!" And the doctor raised a finger to his straw hat and went on his way with a dignity peculiar to himself. Alas! this town was so much too small for him! There was scarcely any one here who possessed real culture; and he sighed and looked out over the bay, as if he would like to go on a voyage.

Now it happened that Lawyer Gundahl came home to dinner in the best of spirits, and that the husband and wife were once

more good friends and drank claret at dinner and exchanged loving glances. But he did not say much, for the town was seeing to all that, and the feeling was there all the same. He rubbed his hands, noticed that it was perfect summer weather, and decided not to go to his office that afternoon, but go for a walk with his wife instead.

And this he did.

They went arm in arm through the little town, these two, and today Gundahl was polite enough to raise his hat to the groups who stood in the street, all talking at once. But he said nothing. It was splendid summer weather, and they were going to take a stroll—he so very small, and she so big and plump. Now he was really going to do what he had often thought of doing; he was going to try to open his wife's eyes to the beauty of nature, and tell her a little about poetry.

Dr. Mark was also going through the town, and it was still as impossible as ever for him to feel any interest in what the people here did. He did his daily work with-

out remembering where he really was, and he went his way like one who raises his hat to a colleague and knows no one else, while every one knows him. He had come here to make his world small. Had he succeeded? What had he found here that would bind his thoughts firmly, and could take the place of this interest in everything on earth, that had become such an intolerable burden to him? He went for long country walks, but forgot to look at the scenery; he brought home plants, but finally took them down to the kitchen; he read novels and poetry, but they only increased his thirst for the great heaving life of the moment all over the world. So it was the papers he went to after all, the numerous papers from Europe, which he hated, but which unfolded his soul and gave him the dizzy feeling of riding huge, heavy billows. A being had grown up within him, which greedily and inexorably demanded this nourishment, and it was stronger than his own little ego which he sometimes felt as something beautiful and peaceful within him.

This little ego kept on shrinking. It was being eaten up by the other. That was how it was. That was how it would be. The thing was to endure it as it was.

This evening he was sitting at home in the drawing-room, bending over *Le Temps*, while his mother knitted by the window. The last rays of the sun were shining across the floor, and through the open window came the sound of the sea. Fru Mark had gold-rimmed eyeglasses on her nose, and as she bent her head to count her stitches, there was a serious, thoughtful look on her delicate face.

Now and again she glanced at this son of hers, but shrank from speaking to him. It seemed to her too that they had become greater strangers to one another since he came home. It was as though she could not get hold of him. He always slipped away. He hid himself. When he spoke, it was in grim humor that was only a grimace. What did he think of her? Had he any respect for what she had accomplished here? Why did he make no friends? Why was there no one he

associated with? Why was he so indifferent to women? What in the world could she do to bring back some of the bright gaiety that had once made him such a favorite with every one?

"What are you reading?" she asked at last.

He let the paper fall, turned round in his chair, and looked at her absently for a little while.

"Mother!" he said at last. "Can you tell me what the politicians in all the Christian countries do?"

"No, indeed! You know more about that than I do, my dear."

"And what they use their armies for? Oh, well, that's true—the armies are only a crowd of waiters on the financiers. They go out and rob their neighbors when Bank-Manager So-and-So needs a piece of their property. But I was reading here of the latest massacres in Armenia. The Turkish soldiers are having a merry time, and they make a mother look on while her child is dashed to pieces against the

font in the church. And what do you think she does? She tears out her own eyes, and cries that God must have gone mad. God! Mad! Not so bad, was it?"

Fru Mark let her knitting fall upon her lap. She gazed at him, but the expression on his face made her afraid to say anything.

He threw down the paper, rose, and began to walk up and down. "You sigh, mother, and by tomorrow you'll have forgotten it, and a good thing too; and all over the world people are reading this now, and they sigh and will have forgotten it by tomorrow. But I ask myself, mother, what does the policy of the great Christian Powers aim at, when such things as this can happen? And they happen now, and will happen tomorrow, and next year; and kings and presidents and ministers and bishops all over Europe sleep well. But I also ask myself what the socialists really want, what the revolutionaries want. Are they only fighting about pots and pans? I am certain that when they get the power into their own hands, they'll be just as coarse

and brutal as the others; and thus all the battles will be wasted, all the fine speeches thrown away. Over and over again! And therefore it'll always be the same problem, mother—What really is man? I have dissected many, and rummaged about in many brains, and studied psychiatry and psychology, and seen and learnt a little; but man—what in the world is man?"

He walked slowly backwards and forwards, with now and then a nervous movement of his hand through his beard. It irritated him that his mother could sit there so calmly and look at him. She did not tremble: it was too far off. It was probably only like a play to her. He suddenly went to the door. He must get out into the open air.

"Harold!" she called.

"Good-night!" he said.

"No, don't go, Harold! Come and sit down! There's something I want to talk to you about."

He stopped at the door. "What's the matter now?"

"Come and sit down! You surely aren't too busy?"

He sat down with his hands on his knees, and looked expectantly at her.

"What I wanted to say, Harold, was that latterly, at any rate, you haven't cared about anything except what was very far away. God knows that this with the Armenians is dreadful, but neither you nor I can help *them*. But there are people in this very town who are suffering, suffering terribly. Have you heard about Ivar Holth?"

"No, mother, I haven't, and I tell you honestly it'll do no one any good by telling me about him either. If he's a person who's really unhappy, as you say, then neither you nor I can help him, I suppose; and, besides, my life is simply divided up into little bits by thinking of all the unfortunate beings on this earth. That's the stupidity of it! Why the deuce should I mix myself up in things that don't concern me? Tell me something pleasant, mother! Give me the name of a newspaper that brings a little sunshine into

one's mind, and I'll go out at once and put my name down for it!"

He slapped his knees with his hands, and rose, still in a state of excitement. His mother sighed and was silent; and after standing for a moment, Harold went out and downstairs.

An hour later he returned, however, and was calmer. He went to his mother, who was still sitting in the same place, and kissed her on the forehead, then sat down, and, taking her knitting away from her, laid it on a chair.

"Don't be angry with me, mother," he said, "for being so impossible! Now tell me what's wrong with that fellow! Ivar Holth was his name, wasn't it?"

So his mother began to tell him, and Harold's attention was aroused. This was not a case of a man who was ruined by drink or poverty. This was not the fault of society. This was only a man who had become a prey to himself and a prey to others. It was impossible to place his case in the usual cate-

gories. Even if the world were some day to be ruled with perfect justice, a thing like this might still happen. Man—do you know man?

When she had finished he sat looking out of the window, running his fingers through his beard.

“And the sister, poor thing!” he said at last. “Has she any one to look after her?”

“I’ve been to see her today, but unfortunately it’s as you say: ‘What is there we can do?’ ”

“I could go and have a talk with him,” said Harold. “I suppose they’d let me into the prison.”

A couple of days later he was sitting reading in his study, when some one knocked and Ivar Holth entered, dressed in a blue smock and big workmen’s boots.

“Excuse my showing myself like this, sir, but I’ve come straight from work.”

“Sit down, Herr Holth!”

But Holth remained standing. “I only wanted to come up at once,” he said, “and thank you for what you’ve done for me.”

"I?" said Harold in astonishment, as he mechanically placed a paper-knife in the book he was reading. "Have I done anything for you?"

"Yes; that day you came down to the prison, you spoke to others besides me, and I've heard that you went to the King's Counsel and—and that you ended by giving a kind of bail for me."

"Oh, nonsense!"

Holth flushed slightly as he stood playing nervously with his cap, but at last he looked up. "It's only that I don't understand"—he said—"how you could do anything of the sort, sir, because you know nothing about me."

"Have you got anything to do now, Holth?"

"Yes, I've got work on the quay, at Sommerfeldt's. But it was Fru Mark who helped there."

Harold looked at this strange man, who spoke like a head-clerk, and stood there in the clothes of a dock-laborer. His face was pale

and his eyes were sunken and surrounded by shadows. There was one town in the world where he had to run the gauntlet every day, and that was the town in which he wanted to live. Do you know man?

"I'm sorry to say I have a favor to ask of you, sir. It was if you would come up and see my sister."

"Is your sister ill?"

"She always has a cough. If you had time, would you mind going with me to see whether it's anything serious. I'm very sorry to trouble you to go to her, but I shall never in this world get her to go to a doctor herself."

"Will you wait a minute while I ring up the hospital?" And Holth heard him say through the telephone: "Hullo! Is that Sister Alma? How is the boy that got the shot in his head? Is he conscious now?—And temperature?—Good! I'll look in later this evening. Good-bye!"

In a little while they were walking together through the town. Just now there

was nobody so much talked about as these two, and people stared. Near the New Church, the brown brick building up on the hill, they passed Lawyer Gundahl, who was taking an evening stroll with his wife. When they had gone past, the lawyer turned, and adjusted his spectacles to look at them, saying: "Do you see that? We may have some fun out of that."

Holth opened the door of the little cottage, and let the doctor go in before him. The children were all in bed, and could be heard chattering in the next room. The young mother was sitting sewing. She rose with an expression of astonishment on her face, and then hastened to clear away some children's clothes that had been left on a chair.

"This is the patient," said Holth. "And this is the doctor, Inga," he went on, turning to his sister. "You mustn't mind our taking you by surprise, but now you've got to go through with it anyhow."

His sister blushed. "But there's nothing the matter with me, Ivar," she stammered,

looking at the doctor. "Whatever have you got into your head?"

"Well, now you must be good enough to let the doctor examine your chest. I'll go and wait outside."

Ivar walked up and down the little garden in suspense. Suppose it were already too late to save his sister, there would one day be four little children who had neither father nor mother.

At last the doctor came out. Ivar hastened up to him, saying: "Well, sir, what do you think?"

Harold stood still and lighted a cigar. "Would you like to come for a walk with me?" he asked.

"A walk! We two!" Ivar involuntarily glanced at his clothes. "No, thank you; I shall be satisfied if you will tell me what you think of my sister."

"Nonsense! Come along and have a little walk with me—up the high-road. It won't do you any harm."

The result was that Ivar went in and put on another coat and went with the doctor.

It was not until they were outside the town on the road that ran at the front of the precipitous cliffs along the bay, that Harold stopped and looked at his companion.

"Yes," he said. "Your sister would need to go to a sanatorium as soon as possible."

Holth turned pale and gazed at him. "Then—then she is really bad!" he said.

"As far as I can tell after this one examination, she is not so bad but that she might get over it if it were only taken at once. But I suppose it will not be very easy for her to leave the children?"

Ivar was not listening. He took off his cap and wiped his brow, and looked out over the bay. "Is that so?" he said as if to himself. "And—and it's my fault!" He breathed heavily and wiped his brow again.

"Let's go on a little farther," Harold suggested.

When Ivar Holth that evening went home alone from the white house, he walked with

an unsteady step. He was thinking of his sister—that was one thing—and of the doctor having treated him as an equal—that was the second thing. He was confused and bewildered. Yes, Dr. Mark had called him Herr Holth all the time. He had spoken in a tone that was neither condescending nor dictatorial, but only pleasant; and when they separated he said that they must soon have another walk like that. Did he mean it?

Ivar Holth went to bed and drew the clothes over his head. Ah, he had continually fallen lower, both in his own and in others' eyes, and a few days ago he was deep down in the abyss; but then a strange hand had appeared and drawn him up again. He had now risen so high that he could once more walk freely about the streets, and once more be the laughing-stock of the town; but suppose the doctor meant to lift him still higher—what then?

"I'm a shipwrecked man," he said to himself, "and the one wave beats me down into the depths, and the next lifts me high up into

the light again; but can I bear all this? Wouldn't it be better to remain down there, and get peace at last?"

A couple of days later a piece of news dropped upon the town like a bomb. A new post, that of steward, had been created at the Seaside Hospital, with a salary of £170 per annum; and the senior physician had appointed Ivar Holth.

There was a commotion in the club when the *Evening Paper* was brought in. Lawyer Gundahl trotted round, rubbing his withered hands. Dr. Prahl sat for a little while looking straight before him, his face growing redder and redder; then he suddenly rose, took up his hat and stick, and going out into the street, turned up towards the white house.

XIII

HAROLD was sitting at the supper-table with his mother when the maid came in and announced that Dr. Prah! had come, and would like to speak to Dr. Mark privately.

"Very well," said Harold, folding up his napkin. "Ask Dr. Prah! up into my study!"

"Now you've got a visitor!" whispered his mother, looking at him. "And I suppose you've no doubt as to what he's come for."

"Poor me!" said Harold smiling as he rose. "I mustn't let the man wait."

This matter of Ivar Holth was something he had settled without its having made any great impression on himself. Why in the world then should the town interfere in it?

When he went upstairs, he found the portly gentleman standing in the middle of the room with his straw hat in one hand and his stick in the other. He bowed stiffly, and

Harold tried to imitate him by bowing just as stiffly.

They looked at one another for a moment. Harold pointed to a chair; Dr. Prahl looked round, caught sight of the chair, sat down, placed his stick between his legs, held his hat over one knee, and cleared his throat. Harold seated himself at his writing-table, leaned back, and met the other's eyes. The situation was comical; neither of them had as yet spoken a word.

Dr. Prahl cleared his throat again. "You were good enough to call on me, Dr. Mark," he said. "I was sorry not to have been at home. And so we have not, I think, met one another before, not, at any rate, since you were a boy. Ah yes, by the bye! At the medical meeting in Christiania two or three years ago."

"Very possibly," said Harold, stroking his beard. "Yes, I remember, now you mention it."

Dr. Prahl shifted his position, and his face flushed a little.

"I have—hm—followed your career, Dr. Mark. You have always interested me as—as a phenomenon."

"Thank you!" said Harold with a smile, taking up a paper-knife and passing it through his fingers.

"You are a great idealist, but of the one-eyed type, be it said; and for that very reason you are—if you will excuse my saying so—a dangerous person."

"Thank you!"

"It is being said in the town that you have given this Ivar Holth the appointment of steward at the hospital."

"That is so."

"It is not a joke then?"

"A joke?"

"You did not wish to give capable and esteemed men in this town the opportunity to apply for such a comparatively good post?"

"It's so easy for esteemed men to get good posts."

"It was perhaps your deliberate intention to appoint a person of unsound mind?"

"Excuse me, but I thought this was a matter between the Department and me."

"Now, Dr. Mark, you can of course show me the door and decline to have any interference on my part; but you mustn't forget that we're both stubborn men. I know what I'm about in coming here."

"What do you want then?"

"I would very seriously counsel you to reconsider the matter for your own sake. Do it this very day! Ivar Holth is mad."

"Nonsense! He is not mad."

"I know more about that than you do. He has long been dulled and deaf to the very centre of all, namely his own dignity."

"That is what I want to restore to him."

"You!"

"Yes, I," said Harold, bending forward.

"Then the position of steward is to be a medicine?" And Dr. Prahl laughed scornfully and wiped his forehead with his pocket-handkerchief.

"I don't think there is any use in our talking about this matter any longer," said Har-

old. "Ivar Holth is a clever accountant. I have that from his former employer."

"Do you know that he's been in prison?"

"So had Bishop Skrefsrud."

"And what if the man's madness develops further, and he one day kills people?"

"Oh, Dr. Prahl, how can you!"

"Well, I've warned you! Afterwards, when it's too late, you can come with the excuse that you meant well; but then I shall stand up and say that there is a kind of philanthropy that is criminal. I have told you so today; and if you answer that you take the responsibility, then I say to you: 'If the man sets fire to the town some day, what good can your responsibility be to us?'"

"I think that now you've explained this sufficiently clearly," said Harold.

Dr. Prahl rose. He was crimson with vexation, and had to use his handkerchief again.

"Well, now you know what all the town thinks about this."

"I'm sorry, but——"

“—But it naturally does not interest you to know what a whole town thinks of your actions.”

“No.”

“No, of course not.” Dr. Prahl bowed and turned to the door. Harold rose to accompany him downstairs, but the other turned as he placed his hand on the door-knob.

“I regret, though, Dr. Mark, that you won’t give me any explanation of this remarkable action; for you see”—he looked down at his straw hat—“I should be sorry if you continued to lead such a solitary life.”

“Explanation? Are you so anxious for an explanation?”

“Yes. I talk to so many people, you know.”

“For goodness’ sake, don’t bring in the many! But between ourselves I may say: Show Ivar Holth a little forbearance! You who talk to so many people, remember that. I suppose we agree in believing that every man has in him material both for heaven and hell; but when once he begins to go down, the

world comes and pushes, and wants him to go down still more quickly. I will ask you not to help with that. As for me, I have striven to the best of my ability for so many things, but——”

“You have indeed! Ha, ha!”

“—But I’ve——” he became almost embarrassed as he leaned against the writing-table—“I’ve come to the conclusion that if you can save a single human being from going to the dogs, it’s better than fighting for ten programs.”

“Hm!” The other blew his nose loudly and looked towards the window. “So that is your——your explanation?”

“Take it as you will. But we doctors try cures upon so many who nevertheless die. Suppose that once in a while we could succeed in—in helping a human being over a purely moral difficulty?”

“It’s a sheer impossibility to help Ivar Holth.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Think! No, no! This is a kind of ideality

again, isn't it? You imagine you can save Ivar Holth by vaguely going about and believing in him."

"Well, honestly—if we lose what we call faith—for instance faith in mankind—why in Heaven's name do we want to heal them?"

"That sounds well, but in this instance your *faith* is criminal folly, which is what a doctor should be the last to engage in. And now I've said my say, and I wash my hands of the whole business. Good evening!"

When the doctor had gone, Harold remained standing at the window to collect his thoughts. "The old fool!" he thought, and smiled. "What in the world does it matter to him! But I was frightfully solemn myself, and talked about rescuing and faith, and about its being better to raise one poor wretch than to fight for ten programs. Did I mean it? Goodness knows whether I didn't mean it! Well, well!"

Dr. Prahl, however, walked past the quays in a strange condition of mind. Something within him told him that when he was young

he might have behaved exactly like Harold Mark. Why, then, had he made so much fuss? Why had he interfered in the confounded matter? What business was it of his?

Dr. Prahl was in reality a warm-hearted man. He would willingly go out to the islands to see sick fishermen who, he knew, were unable to pay him a farthing; and he had many a time given a poor old woman both a prescription and a few coppers to go to the chemist's with. But he had a weakness, and that was that he liked to act pope. If anything happened in the town that he had no share in, he inflated himself and thundered. He had once set afloat this assertion that Ivar Holth was mad. He was not quite sure that it was the case, but when he had said a thing, a great many people believed that it must be so. "Dr. Prahl says so too," they would say. But now perhaps Harold Mark would triumph some day. You false prophet! You gossip! You old fool! Well, we shall see!

To save by faith in mankind. Ha! Ivar

Holth was to be saved by human faith. Dr. Prahl could not restrain himself; he handed over the phrase to be laughed to scorn by the town; and though he was a little ashamed when he did it, the first person he repeated it to was Lawyer Gundahl. They were just words that would raise a laugh all over the town.

Afterwards whenever he met Ivar Holth, he scanned him with severe eyes. "I have said you'll be an incendiary some day, or a murderer, and we shall see." And it was as though, without knowing it himself, he exerted his will-power as he looked at him, as if to force him to commit these crimes at once, so that he could gain his point.

XIV

It was in the hot days of July, and the town lay in a blue haze. Haymaking had begun along the shore, and this was the time when the young Consul Mohn held his annual summer ball at his country-house on an island off the coast.

Harold Mark was invited, and Harold Mark accepted. Both things were unexpected; but his mother was now sitting alone at the dinner-table while he walked up and down in the room overhead, dressing.

The footsteps sounded so cheerful, and he was humming a tune. He was looking forward to the evening. She could hardly believe that it was he walking about overhead and singing.

Fru Mark had also sung like that when she was a young girl going to a ball, but that was long ago; and she wondered whether the seriousness acquired in her long life of labor

had not also cast a cold shadow over her son when he was young and gay.

He was still singing. Great heavens, how he sang!

He was standing in his shirt-sleeves in front of the mirror, struggling with his collar-stud. "Now, you idiot! won't you? At last! But that tie's got a spot on it." He went to the drawers and turned them over.

"Ah, mother! Have you come to see how fine I'm going to be? Today I'm going to put on a white waistcoat and dress coat. Have you ever seen me so smart before?"

"No, my dear, not for a long time, at any rate." She sat down on the sofa, and looked at him with loving, smiling eyes.

"That rose of yours, mother, down there on the wall, has such a scent that it makes me drunk. Things like that ought to have a temperance society too, don't you think so?"

"Now you must dance a great deal," said his mother, "and choose a very pretty partner."

"Do you know I'm dancing-mad in every

muscle! And now I understand why I've wanted to root out all the evil in the world. It was so as to have a good conscience to put my arm round girls' waists and just dream and dance. What time is it?" He looked at his watch and put it in his pocket.

"Well, good-bye then, little mother!" He went to her, and taking her head between his hands, smiled down into her face, and finally sat down beside her on the sofa for a moment, with his arm round her shoulders.

"You sit here like a patient *mater dolorosa* for the whole world! That must be why your hair's become so gray."

"Now, why will you always talk nonsense when you talk to me, Harold?"

"Why, you know perfectly well, mother, that there's nothing but nonsense in me. Now, for instance, I'm going to play pope-joan with the devil for—for Ivar Holth. The prophet Prah! will probably hold the cards for the evil one, and all the town will look on as at a play. Ha, ha, ha! Isn't that amusing? That's the kind of trifle I enliven myself with

now—I who once dreamed of becoming a great man—Well, I suppose it's time. Good-bye!"

"Don't forget to take a warm coat with you! You'll be warm after dancing, and it's cold on the water."

The little steamer sailed out of the bay, looking as if it were filled with flowers of every hue; but they were people in bright summer attire—coats, dresses and straw hats. A little band began playing, and the faces on board began to brighten. Harold was standing at the railing, talking to Consul Mohn's sister; but when he saw something white begin to wave from his mother's house, he sprang up onto a seat and eagerly waved his straw hat.

Fröken Mohn was fair, tall and stately. She wore a light cloak and a veil over her hat, and she looked at him with a peculiar smile.

"You're fond of your mother, I can see, Dr. Mark."

"You've no idea what a large heart I've got, Fröken Mohn; so beware! I'm quite

unmanageable when I start in that direction."

"You!" She laughed. "You who shun us all! What can have come over you to let my brother succeed in dragging you out here to-day?"

"Why, of course, it's all purely a matter of calculation. I held back at first. I know how much every one loves me, and then one oughtn't to give way at once. You, being a woman, know that."

She shook her head and smiled.

It was a hot evening. The sun stood among flaming clouds far down in the west. The water lay without a ripple, and it was only when the bay widened out into the sea that the surface was ruffled with a blue breeze. A world of islands unfolded themselves, strewn, as it were, all over the broad surface of wavelets. Low rocks covered with seaweed, and smooth rocky islets, lay in groups like mother seabirds with their young ones round them. Great animals with blind faces had lain down out here, and in their shelter stood one or two gray fisher-huts, with smoke going up from

their chimneys. Old men with humps on their backs were rising out of the sea to gaze into the west; and there a giantess had waded out from the mountain and sat down in the sea to blow upon it. Her cauldron lay bottom upwards beside her, and over it there now wandered large flocks of hardy sheep. Multitudes of white gulls sailed overhead, screaming and calling, gilded by the sun; the waves foamed at the foot of the cliffs, and there was a smell of salt sea, of seaweed and of green things wafted over to the steamer, that made nostrils expand and eyes brighten with the feeling of freshness, while the band involuntarily played with more vigor.

Harold did not know many on board, but he wandered about, giving special attention to the ladies. He had once more made an effort to put aside all seriousness, and today he was going to look at women. He knew that to many of them the consul's ball was the event of the year. Lady clerks saved up their white dresses from year to year; young wives who could not afford to keep a maid, had got

their mother-in-law to look after the children, and were here in wedding-dresses re-made; and clerks and shop-assistants were among the guests today, for they were generally the most indefatigable of dancers.

They were approaching an island on which stood a single house, a large white one, flying a flag. The steamer went alongside a pier that jutted into the water on piles, and her passengers streamed ashore, talking gaily. Lawyer Gundahl was running about with a rose in his buttonhole and a word for everybody. A dancing-floor of boards had been laid down on the flat courtyard behind the house; and after food and wine had been served at small tables among the fir-trees, the band began to play and the couples moved out.

A young man with a reddish beard and eyeglasses came out of the house with a white-haired lady on his arm. She held back a little, but he drew her on, and as they passed Harold the young man said with a smile: "We two generally open the ball, but mother

had hidden herself today." It was Consul Mohn and his mother.

The sinking sun was sending crimson shafts across the green water. A tall-masted schooner stood out on the horizon to the south, and in the sunset light her sails were filled with purple and gold. The year was so far advanced that the evening gradually became dark blue; the sun disappeared, the clouds faded, and here and there a pale star came out, while, all round the island, bonfires were lighted and rockets sent up.

The steamer had anchored a little way out, and her colored lights twinkled across the dark water.

Baskets of champagne were constantly being carried to a long table under the fir-trees, and every now and then the consul's voice was heard above the general conversation, making known the fact that fresh supplies of the strengthening beverage had arrived.

And they danced. A few of the gentlemen began to grow red in the face, and to embrace one another and roar with laughter

at the veriest trifles. Differences in business life and on the municipal board were forgotten, and men drank to eternal friendship between two waltzes.

And Harold danced. He felt that he had regained his own youth again. He did not care much for these men, but that must be a fault in himself. He was dancing now. Dr. Prahl was not here, but innumerable eyes sent him timid glances that said: "There he is!" Well, now it was the daughter of the director of police with whom he was dancing for the fourth time. She was twenty, red-haired, slim and pale, and with the most mischievous brown eyes in the world. Gay little feet in white shoes were once more tripping about beside his own, and he felt little breaths against his neck, one after another. And the stars were above them, her thin yellow dress harmonised so well with the dusk, the water rose and fell on the beach, the bonfires gleamed, and all around were people with whom he would still try to be friends.

By degrees, however, he became quite in-

toxicated, not with the couple of glasses of soda water he had drunk, but with this girl, with the dancing, with all the light dresses, and with the blessed feeling of being free, free at last from everything painful in the world. The infinite horizon disappeared from his mind, the ubiquitousness of his thoughts closed in, and there was nothing left but they two, they two, borne upon broad, golden waves of sound. He threw back his head, and held the young girl a little closer to him; the measure seemed to become more lingering, and they danced to a secret rhythm of their own while everything round them vanished. Man at play is divine, and he was now sheer delight in the great forgetfulness. Eve! What a little name! It is like a bunch of white flowers!

People stood round and watched them, whispered together and laughed. Now they were the only couple on the floor, and it seemed as if they were never going to leave off.

Lawyer Gundahl was standing at the long

table with a glass in his hand and in an elevated mood. "What!" he exclaimed, adjusting his spectacles to look at the two that were dancing. "I thought that man there was only a gramophone, but just look! He's really a human being!"

The feeling among the gentlemen of the town had been rather uncertain on account of the inclusion of this revolutionist among the guests; but the wine and the dancing had so enlarged all minds, that they were ready to forgive all the world, and Lawyer Gundahl suddenly jumped up on to a form and tapped his glass, saying: "Ladies and gentlemen!——"

When Harold made his way out of the circle with his partner on his arm, a young man came up to him and said: "Dr. Mark, you must really come up to the table, for Lawyer Gundahl is making a speech for you."

"It would be better if he came and danced," was all the reply Harold made as he went on. He wanted to do a little love-making among

the rocks, and perhaps find an ox-eyed daisy to decorate his lady-love with.

“Now, Eve, why do you laugh at me all the time like that?”

“My name isn’t Eve, and, moreover, we haven’t dropped titles, though that may come in time; and besides it’s so funny that you don’t recognise me at all.”

“Recognise you? Have I met you before?”

“I’m in the State Telegraph Office, and I don’t know how many times you’ve come to me and handed in telegrams.”

With the first rays of the morning sun, the steamer came in among the rocks again. The party had been so successful that the younger people continued dancing on deck, while others sat wrapped up in shawls, leaning against the railing and trying to sleep.

By nine o’clock the steamer had reached the town, and half an hour later Harold was far out along the shore, bathing. He lay on his back out there, and let himself drift. Little wavelets washed about his ears, but he rose and fell on the fresh, smooth surface.

Ah, he still felt so light and free! He could look at sky and mountain without at the same time thinking of a thousand other things. A solitary strip of snow still lay up there on a mountain-top and blushed in the sun; and two little houses on a green patch hung upon the steep mountain side like a picture on a wall. And here he lay. Could he at last succeed in making the world small round him? He ought to have a wife and children, but it would have to be a wife who would go with him to protest-meetings against the massacres in Kiev, ha, ha! "Thora!" he said to himself. "I wonder if you're still in Paris! Have you really two little ones? I wonder if he's good to you. . . . So the little girl with the red hair last night was not called Eve, but Elina. Would she marry me, I wonder? Tomorrow we're going for a walk together, she and I."

He turned over and swam in towards land; but before going to the hospital he went home to get a cup of coffee and see if the foreign mail had arrived.

XV

IT was a strange day for Ivar Holth when he dressed himself to go and begin work at his new post at the hospital. Yesterday he was a dock-laborer and the laughing-stock of every one; today he was going to walk through the town again as a well-dressed man, and how would he manage it? When he lay on the ground, people's laughter and scorn were matters of indifference to him; but now, in these clothes, with this new position, he had risen into another atmospheric stratum, and the desire to win again the esteem of others was awakened. He knew, however, that everybody was angry with Dr. Mark for having given him the appointment, and he dreaded having to go out and meet the stony glances from those hundreds of eyes. It was as if he were not sure whether his knees would manage to bear him.

Captain Harrang had many friends, and

he was now applying for his removal from the town. His wife was the beauty of the district, and the gentlemen were going to lose her. This was Holth's fault. It was said that she scarcely dared to walk in the street any longer, and that again was his fault. Very well, but they might set their minds at rest now; he was done with all that nonsense. He now had only one thought, and that was that his benefactor, Dr. Mark, should not be disappointed.

He came out of his room into the sitting-room in his blue suit and white collar. His sister was sitting sewing by the window, and raised her head and smiled at him. The children stopped in their play and cried: "Oh, Uncle Ivar! what are you so fine for?" He patted them on the head and his sister on the cheek, and went towards the door, where he suddenly sank on to a chair.

"What's the matter?" asked his sister as she half rose.

"Oh, nothing!" he said, drawing his hand across his forehead, and trying to laugh.

"It's only so strange that—that this is me." He looked down at himself, then rose suddenly, said "Good morning," and went out. In the passage he put on his straw hat, took his coat upon his arm and his stick in his hand, but had to stand at the door for a minute to pull himself together again, before he went out to meet the hundreds of eyes.

It was a beautiful day. It had rained in the night, but the sun was just beginning to shine. The sound of a steamer whistle came from the harbor, and a three-master was tacking across the bay to get out into the open. It was the hour when people left their homes for the office or shop in the town. In former days Ivar Holth had many acquaintances among the younger members of the commercial class; but when he drove a baker's cart he had kept his head down when he passed them, so as to save them from having to recognise him. But today? Would they know him again? Would their faces smile and as it were welcome him back? Or would they shut themselves up and indicate that it

would never be of any use for him to try and rise again?

So he started on his walk. He met the old town magistrate, and took off his hat with a stylish sweep. The white-haired old gentleman nodded slightly without raising his hand to his hat, and looked straight before him all the time. "It'll be worse when I meet men I know," thought Ivar, and there was one of them coming now, Hvass, the bank manager. He and Ivar had been at the commercial college together in olden days, and both of them had risen steadily until the one suddenly fell. Hvass was carrying a portfolio under his arm, and must have recognised Ivar had he not looked so obstinately straight before him. At this moment Ivar had a thousand watchful eyes. He took off his hat. The other raised his hand to his, and went on undisturbed. Well, Dr. Prahl's evil prophecy had come to Ivar's ears, so it had probably gone all over the town. He was a dangerous person, and his friends were quite right to

be on their guard; but he knew what this meant.

He met others and felt fresh stings, and his steps quickened like the steps of one that flees. He met Dr. Prahl, who drew himself up and swung his stick; and Ivar dreaded meeting his glance, which he knew of old, for it seemed as if it would compel him to do something evil. Outside the cathedral-school he met some boys with books under their arms. They did not know him at first, but took him for a stranger. Suddenly, however, one of them shouted: "Thank you, three loaves tomorrow!" and after Ivar had passed, he heard them singing about Potemkin. At last he found himself inside the gates of the hospital, and stood still to wipe his forehead and take a good breath.

"Pull yourself together, confound you!" he muttered. "They can't do you any harm!"

It was so reassuring when Dr. Mark came and talked in a pleasant, natural manner. They went round and decided what should come under his administration. He was to

superintend the newly-installed kitchen, the accounts and the provisioning. He also had the cash in his keeping. A little office was prepared for him in the back building, and all he had to do was to start work; there was no magic about it, and as head-clerk he had had far more difficult things to manage.

"You're getting on splendidly," said Dr. Mark that evening. "I never imagined you would get through so much in one day."

Ivar knew this was intended as an encouragement, and he smiled; but it did him good nevertheless. If only the doctor would praise him out in the town too! It would feel like a counter-move, and it might even reach—*her*. Her? Was he really still thinking about Fru Harrang? No, hang it! He had done with that nonsense now! It was only that she was going away—away from the town!

He grew busy. It was splendid to have plenty to do, for then he had not time to think; but every day he had to run the gauntlet going to and from his home. Dr. Prahl's

evil prophecy seemed to gaze at him out of every eye. He was dangerous. He would end with murder or incendiarism. It was almost as if the town wanted it, and as if this will entered into him and almost became his own. Oh! the contorted face of this town! How evilly it glared into his mind! He actually felt a desire to let it gain its point; he felt something within him that wanted to yield to and humor it. If he had only had something with which to resist, some faithful friends or a wife! There was the doctor, of course; but one man beside you when your knees are weak and you have to face the whole world, is not enough.

He had his father, however, the old parish clerk out on the island Asköen, to write to and tell of his good fortune. He also began to borrow books from Dr. Mark. Then there was his sister, whom he would soon be able to help to get into a sanatorium. But, above all, there was the necessity of not disappointing the doctor. All this was certainly

worth a struggle, and he would make it succeed.

A group of gentlemen were standing talking outside the grocer's shop. They were Dr. Prah!l, Consul Mohn, Pastor Larsen and Lawyer Gundahl.

"Sh!" said the lawyer, as Dr. Mark and the new steward went by on the other side of the street.

Pastor Larsen was a small, pale man with eager gestures, and wore spectacles.

"So those are the two?" he said.

"Precisely," said the lawyer. "Those are the two."

"Ye-es," said Dr. Prah!l, looking another way with heightened color. Of late he had become excited at the mere sight of Ivar Holth.

"You doctors are rather strange," said the lawyer pleasantly to this imperious gentleman. "You don't always agree. One of you orders a lunatic asylum, and the other writes a prescription for faith in mankind."

Dr. Prah!l laughed scornfully.

"What does Pastor Larsen think about it?" asked Consul Mohn with a smile.

"I think, of course—and I've said it distinctly enough to all who've asked me—that if anybody's to be saved by faith, it won't at any rate be the faith of his fellow-creatures."

"But what if the man turns out to be both capable and steady?" suggested the lawyer still more pleasantly than before.

"Well, I've no doubt that if they succeed in keeping that fellow out of prison, this phrase about faith in mankind will become a new battle-cry against Christianity. We're accustomed to all sorts of things from that quarter. Good morning, gentlemen!" And the excitable little man put up his umbrella as a protection against the few drops of rain that were falling, and went his way.

"I believe that Dr. Mark uses that man as an object of study," continued Lawyer Gundahl. "As an animal for vivisection. In the Pasteur Institute they had monkeys for that purpose; but here he has found Ivar Holth. He's his chimpanzee, he, he! That too can be

called, in a sense, faith in mankind. Ah! you doctors! I shall follow the example of his reverence and make my escape."

It sometimes really happens that a small town holds together in some particular matter, and becomes like one being. Its face, its play of features are turned in the same direction. One day it needs something to look up to in common, another day something to jeer at. What would there otherwise be to talk about when people went to see one another? People go to church and to picture-houses, they weep at funerals and are affected by beautiful music; but they also have a little laughter, and it must have an outlet. If once a man has become ridiculous, it will be difficult for him to be taken seriously again. The town needs him as a laughing-stock. To take him away, to raise him, becomes almost an injury. A man who, before the eyes of every one, throws himself away because he is hopelessly in love with another man's wife, has made himself ridiculous. Another man, who tries to help the poor fellow up again, and

openly confesses that he does it through faith in mankind, makes people prick up their ears. What? In reality it is what is preached in church, and it is beautiful and sublime; but then some one laughs, then two more, and then they will all see that they must save themselves from becoming ridiculous, and so they all join in. Then came Lawyer Gundahl's remark about the chimpanzee. This ran from house to house, and even serious people could not help laughing aloud. Then when they met Holth in the street, they could not possibly help staring at him. There comes the animal! The two doctors were playing, as it were, for this man; which of them would win? Dr. Prahl was a highly-esteemed man: Dr. Mark's coming had been an offence to the town, and he was now regarded as a renegade even among the labor and prohibition parties. Which of them would win? Well, we shall see! It is less ridiculous to hold with the one who prophesies evil. Just look at the fellow! Here he comes! Could any one doubt that Dr. Prahl is right?

What are you keeping us waiting for? You may just as well throw off your mask today; we can see through you, and we shall be on our guard. It shall not be said, at any rate, that we have had any fellowship with you!

From that time a watch was kept on the man. His words and actions were explained—in a manner; and he himself felt it when he went through the town, felt it as if he were breathing in an atmosphere so sultry that he had continually to wipe the moisture from his forehead.

One day in the beginning of August, Ivar came home looking very important, and standing in the middle of the room, slapped his breast-pocket and said to his sister: "What do you think I have here, my dear?"

"Have you got your salary now?"

He nodded, took out his pocket-book, and waved some large bank-notes before her eyes.

"What do you think this is for?"

"You need a suit of clothes perhaps?"

"Oh, you think so, do you? No, my dear; you're going to a sanatorium. Dr. Mark had

word today that there's room for you now at Reknæs, so you're going tomorrow."

"Going? Are you still keeping on with that nonsense that there's something the matter with me?"

"You're going tomorrow," he repeated as he put the money back into his pocket.

"Now, Ivar, do you really mean that I'm to go away and leave my four children?"

"I've got hold of a trustworthy woman to come and look after both the children and me."

The battle continued as the day went on. It ended by her taking out the children's things and beginning to look them over. The little ones stood with their fingers in their mouths, and asked her what she was crying for. Going away? Was she going away? Oh, then they would go too! The little boy with the golden curls stretched out his arms and wanted to go at once.

In the evening, when everything was at last quiet, she sat down beside the little beds and looked at the four rogues with their eyes

closed. Tomorrow another woman would undress them.

Afterwards she sat by the window in the sitting-room, looking out, her pale face tinged with red from the flaming evening sky in the west.

And Ivar—if he did not even believe her—ah, how would things go with him?

On the following day the little party went down to the quay, she herself carrying the youngest boy, and the three other children walking between Ivar and the stranger who was now to be both sister and mother for a time.

When the steamer moved away from the quay, the pale young mother stood leaning upon the railing, trying to stifle her weeping and coughing with her handkerchief, and the little group that was left standing on the pier waved and waved, while the little boy screamed because he had not been allowed to go with his mother.

But Ivar was to experience a fresh emotion before he went home. He had let the children

and the housekeeper go on in front while he wandered a little way along the shore, when round one of the landing-stages a woman in a white cloak and a brown veil came towards him. It was—it was Fru Harrang!

She stopped suddenly, and he did the same and then quickly took off his hat. She drew nearer with an embarrassed smile, and held out her hand; but the next moment she looked round. Was there any one watching them?

“I haven’t had an opportunity of congratulating you on the new appointment yet,” she said; “but I’ve been so glad that things are beginning to go so well for you.”

“Thank you very much!” He smiled and put on his hat.

“And now we all hope that you’ll behave sensibly. You will, won’t you? You must promise me you will.”

“Are you going away, Fru Harrang?”

“Yes, in about a month, I think. My husband’s got a post in Stavanger, and it’ll be best for all parties. Good-bye then, and don’t forget what I’ve asked of you!”

He was left standing and looking after her. She was charming, as charming as ever! She had blushed when she looked at him, had pressed his hand and smiled up at him. In spite of everything!

But she was going away!

That evening he moved his bed into the children's room, so that they should settle down quietly without their mother; and he lay listening to their gentle breathing. Suppose their mother never came back any more! Then these four would have no one in the world but him.

But *she* was going away!

"And you?" he said to himself. "Can you bear all the evil in this town when it's no longer for her sake? You still love her. You think of her every day. When you tie your tie in the morning, it is with the thought of possibly meeting her. You dream of being allowed to carry a basket home for her just once more. She is the holy temple in your mind, now, always, for ever. But she is going away, and then the town will be nothing but

an icehouse for you. You cannot go after her. But the town will stone you. And she is going away, going away, going away!

“Go to sleep now, children! Mother is all right.”

XVI

SISTER ALMA was in the doctor's clinic, talking to him at the writing-table, when the door opened and a country-woman of about fifty, gray and wrinkled, came in. "I just want to say good-bye," she said.

"Oh, is that you, Martha?" said the doctor, turning round in his chair. "Yes, of course! You're discharged today, aren't you!"

Martha had undergone a serious operation. For years she had suffered with a tumor in the stomach, so large that she could not breathe when she lay down, and had therefore to sit up in a chair when she slept; but this had now been removed, and as it weighed with its appurtenances more than sixteen pounds, she was now as slim and light as a young girl and her dress much too loose, her skirt-band going almost twice round her waist.

"God bless you!" she said with tears in her eyes, as she held out her hand.

"Well, good-bye, Martha! You'll be quite like a bride again with your husband, for you're thirty years younger than when you came. Good-bye! And a pleasant journey!"

When the woman had gone, Sister Alma exclaimed: "Upon my word, Dr. Mark; you must feel happy yourself now, after having performed such a miracle!"

"Miracle? Why, it was a comparatively benign tumor. Any one could have done it equally well."

"Oh, yes! I think I see them!"

"And moreover, the thing that's successful is not really interesting. What I'm always thinking about is all that I can't do."

"Then you can never be quite happy."

"No; but where in the stars is it written that I should be happy?"

"What if I invited you to have a cup of chocolate in my room?"

"That's another matter," he said, rising and laughing. "Just wait a minute while I wash my hands."

Sister Alma's was a comfortable room, with

flowers in the windows and pictures on the walls; and music stood open on the doctor's piano. Harold bent down to see what it was. "Why, I really believe," he said, "that you've been tackling Beethoven—the ninth symphony!"

Her face flushed and she busied herself over the spirit-lamp on which the chocolate was standing.

"Wasn't that the condition on which I was to have your piano? You required me to practice the piano arrangement of the ninth symphony?"

"Did I? I'm glad you've dreamt about me. But isn't it frightfully difficult?" He sat down on the piano-stool and played a few bars.

"Difficult! It's almost impossible unless you have four hands. I've done scarcely anything else in my leisure moments for the last five or six weeks; and I think it gets more difficult every time."

"I heard it on a large orchestra at the Queen's Hall in London. By Jove, sister,

it's a comfort to us all that the man who created that has actually lived!"

"You once played the violin, didn't you, Dr. Mark?"

"Yes, fancy! I did!" He looked out over the piano towards the window. "Yes, and I didn't play so badly either."

"Why did you leave off?"

"You may well ask. But, you see, there must be a certain rhythm in one's self—well, the long and the short of it is, I don't play now."

The chocolate was ready. Sister Alma, in her gray linen dress, and at her throat a blue enamel brooch with the red cross on it, was very deft.

He wondered whether this woman was still restless. Her good spirits made sunshine in the wards wherever she went; she was as happy as a bird. Had she still her dreams? Yes, he had heard her say that she hoped to have a little cottage with a garden right in the country when she grew old. It was the evening-land to which she now and then

turned; but she was still young, and might bewitch as many men as she liked.

"The chocolate's ready," she said. "But you must excuse the cakes."

When Harold went to his room for his hat and coat, before going home to dinner, he found Ivar Holth sitting there waiting for him. He rose, and the doctor was so startled at the expression of his face that he could not help gazing at him.

"Well, my friend," he said, "what's the matter?"

"It's only, doctor, that I shall have to give up being steward."

Harold offered him a cigar, but he declined it. The doctor took one himself, lighted it very carefully, blew out the match and laid it in an ash-tray; and not until this was done did he look at the other again. "What's all this nonsense about?" he asked.

"Have you seen what the *Evening Paper* and the *Socialist* said last night?"

"No."

"Don't you read the papers?"

"Oh, yes, far too many, but none of those that are published here."

"There's an attack on you, because you didn't advertise the post of steward. There are many who would have applied for it, both the editor of the *Evening Paper* and the business-manager of the trade unions, as well as one or two teachers and a lawyer. They say it's scandalous that it should have been done secretly."

"What does it matter to you if they attack me?"

"No, no one can do anything to you; they all know that. But it falls back upon me. I'm sure there'll be an article tomorrow about the man who's superseded the others—about me! I can't stand any more, sir. Let them have the post and fight over it! They've tormented me enough now. If I only go into a shop, or show myself in the street—oh!"

"What? Do you pay any attention to other people when you go along the street?"

The other raised his head and stared. "Pay any attention to others?"

"I don't. I never have the least idea whom I meet. I'm thinking about my own affairs. You ought to do that too."

The other shook his head. He did not understand all this aloofness.

"By the way, I've got a Nordland boat down here, and I'm going out on a trial trip this afternoon. She's a six-oared boat. You must come with me, but take plenty of warm clothing with you, for we shan't be back before night. And now come with me down town, and look the rabble in the face; for hang it all, you're more capable than all of them put together. Come along!"

The little Nordland boat with her high prow and stern, white sheer-strakes and tanned square-sail, looked like a foreign bird among the large ships. She shot out across the bay, the water foaming up her bow. Harold sat at the rudder, his sou'wester down over his ears, and long sea-boots up over his thighs, and with a pipe in his mouth. It reminded him of his life in Finmark. How often he had sailed out like this to a light-

house where a young girl sat watching for him at a window! That was long ago. That was when he saw all the world in the light of himself. Now everything was reversed, and he had become nurse to a man whom, he thought, should be able to help himself, if once he were placed by a quick movement upon his feet.

Ivar sat forward on a thwart, with his soft cap pulled down over his ears, and his face screwed up against the wind and water. He was from Asköen, and had, so to speak, grown up in boats. But his eyes looked so sleepless in his pale face, and he smiled all the time like a man without will, without peace of mind, without confidence in himself. No, thought Harold, he could not leave hold of him. It was true it had nothing to do with him, but he had taken him on his shoulders, and for very shame he must try to carry him out. Could he? Suppose he could not even manage as much as that!

“Loose the tack there! Look out! We’re going over! That’s it! Make the sail fast! You know the knot, I see. Well done!”

As the sun went down, the islands rose copper-red out of a greenish blue, choppy sea, the last spray-besprinkled islet was left behind, and the open sea unfolded its green surface, which looked as though it were rolling up into a yellow strip of sky in the west. Against this yellow strip could be seen a solitary steamer with her trail of smoke. Twilight began to fall. The sun had disappeared. The boat went more slowly; they were cutting through a shoal of herrings, and the water seethed with shining little tails, while in the air above, a flock of gulls were screaming distractedly over such abundance.

It was almost dark when they landed on a little island where multitudes of eider-ducks raised a chorus of protests against the invasion of their kingdom by strangers. The two men leaped on to the beach, drew up the boat, and began to carry ashore the necessities for a meal. Ivar brought the kettle full of water, and an armful of dry wood, and in a short time a little fire was burning on the shore and they were sitting one on each side

of it watching the kettle, which was suspended over it. Far away to the west a beam of light shot up every now and again from the horizon over the dark surface of the water; and this time it was neither from sailing-vessel nor steamer, but the light from Simlingen Light-house.

Men become comrades beside a fire such as this. They drown the sound of the waves breaking on the shore with their talk and laughter. "Look out, you duffer! It's boiling over!" "Now don't upset the cream!" "Just open that tin of anchovies!" "What's become of the butter?" "Here's the green cheese." "The bread's in the basket."

It was so good for Ivar to be scolded a little, to talk about all sorts of things, and to be out in such weather in this great realm of ocean and birds of the ocean. It distributed the emotion in his mind. If one has a sore place in one's mind, one's thoughts are always rubbing against it, and it hurts, hurts unbearably. But now his ideas were dancing about in other regions of his head, and he saw

them and smiled, and thought it was well that the sore place could escape for a moment. They ate their supper, resting on their elbows. The coffee tasted delicious. Then pipes were lighted. It was quite dark now, but from the sea in the east a golden line emerged slowly, growing wider until it looked like half a shining coin; and soon there lay a broad bridge of moonlight across the waves.

They put on their ulsters and lay down on the sand, both looking at this bridge from the sky to them, with the waves rising and falling in it. Dry seaweed crackled under their heads. Now and then a puff of wind came and drew a shower of sparks from their pipes. It was the end of August, and far out at sea in the mild evening air.

Holth would have liked to move nearer to his companion but a feeling of respect kept him back. The doctor was silent, his mind occupied with thoughts that he wanted to keep to himself. If only he could have gone close to him, thought Holth, and confided everything to him, asked his advice and help

against the terrible thoughts that often frightened him; but one cannot talk to others about what is really private and concerns one's destiny. They will only laugh. He had met her again today, and she was more beautiful than ever; but she did not seem to notice his greeting, and that hurt him and gave him so much to ponder over. But if he spoke of it, others would laugh. Nonsense, they would say. So he must be silent and shut it in, so that no one could see that he was thinking about it continually. It is the sore place that has been raw and bleeding for so long that it has mortified, so to speak. Then there was the town, whose gaze forced an evil will into him, and wanted him to decamp with the money, or kill somebody, or set fire to something. He would soon be unable to do otherwise than let them gain their point. He must give way in order to obtain peace. But talk about it? And to one so superior as Dr. Mark? Oh, no! Hide it, hide it well! There might be much to say on the subject of how things would go with him when she was gone; but he must be silent. Who

would listen to it without laughing at him? He must be silent and think about it and shut himself out from the whole world so as to think deeply about all this. And here he lay, far out at sea, in the company of an able man, and yet he was quite alone in all the world.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Harold, turning to him.

"I'm sleepy. I almost think I was asleep."

Harold looked at his outstretched form with his ulster buttoned up to his chin and his eyes closed. The firelight flickered over his thin face, showing nervous movements about his mouth. Oh, indeed! Did he think he could make him believe he was asleep?

"Now here's a young, capable, good fellow," thought Harold, "but some mouse or other has set itself to gnaw at his life's root. Can I help him? Here's a human being who's unhappy. Am I not a doctor? I could prescribe a treatment, write a prescription, select a knife, or—or suggest social re-molding, a better distribution of food and dwelling. Would that help him? Or I could preach a new religion, and

point to a man hanging upon a cross, who died for him. Would that help him?

"He is only a human being, not an idea, not a principle, not a party; he is only a human being. Can I help?

"Is it worth while spending so much of my time on this fellow? Nurse! A bad word. I can't let go of him in any case.

"You've come here," he said to himself. "You ploughed through so many books, listened to so many professors, went abroad and learned still more, you wandered through palaces of art, and lived in a poor neighborhood and felt yourself called, and believed in systems and theories and gospels. You've come through all that now, and here you've reached the human being. Can you help a single being who is unhappy? You, who are tormented by the feeling that your conscience encircles the entire world, while you are helpless and can improve nothing—you have at any rate a human being beside you. Do you believe in man? Do you believe that there's

so much of the divine in him as to make it worth a battle, help, a sacrifice?

“Don’t despise a single human being! He is made of the same material as mankind in general. The infinite world is mirrored in the small. You, who want to take every one with you on the way to the great dawn, help that man!”

Harold lay staring into the darkness and the sky, and forgot to fill his pipe.

But what had happened to the sea? It had become a scene of living lights and shadows. A large cloud was still on fire towards the south, and kept a strip of sea as bright as copper. In the west, long gleams of light darted out of the bridge of gold every time a wave lifted its head in the moonlight. The waves were dancing with the night and with the moon. The sea was holding a special festival of light that night.

“Even if you could help that man,” he went on to himself, “you would have to change the whole town too. He is an echo of the couple of thousand souls in there, as you are

of the world. Take him by the hand! Go with him towards those stupid lights beyond the harbor, towards the stupid provincial souls there, stand by his side, support him! Perhaps it will not be of the slightest use, because it is the people all round us who determine what we are and what we are to do.

"You are independent of the provincial town; but the world's press determines your mood. Arouse his interests, widen his horizon, teach him to put little things in their proper place—then perhaps he'll be like you, and will that be any better?

"Help him? You?

"You don't even know what he's lying groaning there for now! Win his confidence—yes, but he'll hide the main things. A human soul is not an easy instrument to play upon.

"Then will you let go of him? Shall the others win the game? Shall he be ruined? No, it must not, must not happen!

"Do you believe in man?"

The little boat was rocking with its stern in

the water, the lighthouse was still sending out its flashes over the sea, and the two men lay stretched one on either side of the fire, each with his eyes closed over his thought-world, lulled by the soothing rhythm of the sea in the gentle night.

XVII

SHE was a little princess from Fairyland, and she lay in her bed in the hospital, and always had tears in her eyes, because she wanted so much to go home. She was fifteen, and was the daughter of a schoolmaster in one of the fjords; and just as the tuberculosis in her knee seemed to be disappearing under the X-ray treatment, suspicious symptoms made their appearance in her shoulder and back. Harold, who went with indifference past so many patients, used to stop and talk to her; indeed he sometimes kept both the assistant and the sister waiting while he sat trying to get the little girl to laugh.

“Well, Marie, have you thought about me at all since yesterday? I mean it, you know!”

And the child lay still and laughed. In order to save her shoulder and back, she was suspended in a long frame which rested on the mattress; and she was only allowed just

to turn her head and to lift one arm. But she laughed. There was a faint color in the delicate little face surrounded by fair hair, but also suffering, dreams, and intelligence. Her gaze was open and far-seeing. She did not know that she would have to lie like that for six months if it was to be of any good; and perhaps it would be necessary to use the knife, and then—poor little Marie!

“What would you like to have now, my dear? Shall I buy you a horse, so that you can ride over the mountains when you go home?”

The child laughed again. She was careful not to move her right arm, but her red lips laughed and showed a number of regular, white teeth.

“I’ve brought a book for you today. Do you know it?” And he gave her Björnson’s “*Synnöve Solbakken*,” into which she peeped eagerly.

“I shall like reading it,” she said, laying it down on the counterpane.

Harold was going to take a fortnight’s holi-

day, and was therefore particularly careful on his rounds today, so that the assistant doctor should know what to do. He had extracted enough from Ivar Holth to know that he was greatly dreading the day of Fru Harrang's departure; and he was going to take him for a walking-tour in the mountains, so that he should not be on the spot just then.

When he said good-bye to Sister Alma in his clinic, he put a bank-note into her hand, saying: "Buy some nice cakes now and then for little Marie, but don't say they're from me."

What was coming to the doctor! She had never seen him like this before with any patient. Was he beginning to get some of that rhythm into his mind, of which he had lately spoken, so that he would perhaps begin to play the violin again?

All the afternoon the place seemed so empty without him. Not long before, she had been sitting up one night with a blind boy who had cerebritis, and just after midnight the door had opened quietly, and the

doctor had come in; and then these two grown-up people had sat there, one on each side of the bed, looking after this child together.

Now he had gone away, and she felt as if she must be more vigilant than ever, in order that nothing wrong should occur while he was away.

She went through the wards again, and saw Marie, the little princess, lying with "Synnöve Solbakken" in her hand and tears in her eyes, and laughing.

In a room on the other side of the passage there lay a queer fellow, a Norwegian-American, who had recently undergone an operation for hernia. He was from some place on the coast, and had been in America for a great many years, but was now going home to marry the love of his youth; but on his way through the town he had fallen ill, and while in the hospital this hard, dry man of fifty had fallen in love with Sister Alma. It was not the first time that this sort of thing had happened, but she was always inclined to laugh. He was on his way home to marry an old

maid who had perhaps waited for him for twenty years, and had now—fallen in love with her! Every time she went in to him, he whispered with emotion: "I love you!" How could she do anything but laugh? And yet what would happen when he had to leave the hospital and go home?

Ivar Holth had gone into the town with the doctor. On the quays they stopped, and the doctor, pointing up to the mountain above his mother's house, said: "Have you ever been to that little farm up there? I always think it's like a picture hanging on a wall, and it must be pretty difficult to get up to, for I can't see so much as a path even."

Ivar laughed. "I climbed up there one day a couple of years ago," he said, "but it was really dangerous. They're a queer old couple that live up there, I can tell you! They have two cows and some fowls; and they never see a human being from year's end to year's end. They hate town people, and if any go up, the old man sometimes takes his gun to them."

"I must go up some day," said Harold.

In the afternoon he went for a walk along the shore with his mother. It was a still, mild autumn day, with patches of yellow showing here and there among the trees on the slopes, and the water as smooth as glass. He was telling her something he had just read in the *New York Herald* about the English india-rubber plantations in South America—in Bolivia, it was. They made the natives carry and drag indiarubber in quantities far beyond human strength, or, failing to do so, they were whipped. Weary mothers might be seen with a child at their breast and their burden of indiarubber on their shoulders; they were foot-sore and bleeding, they went on until they dropped, but had to struggle up again and still drag themselves along; for if they brought too little indiarubber they would be flogged. "The shareholders in London get two hundred per cent.," said Harold. "That's a nice story, isn't it, mother?"

Fru Mark sighed and looked across the bay. If only he would give up reading newspapers!

A little while after she smiled and tried to give a brighter color to his thoughts by saying: "What's this I hear about you, Harold? I'm told you danced nearly the whole evening with one young lady out at Consul Mohn's!"

"Oh, is that what's occupying your thoughts?" he said, raising his eyebrows.

"And since then you've been for a walk with her two or three times, and you've never mentioned it to me."

"I'd quite forgotten it, mother. But thank heaven we still have little visits from youth, only unfortunately they're all too short."

"What nonsense! Why, you're not forty yet!"

"Much obliged!"

"Would you like me to ask your little lady friend to spend an evening when you come back?"

"Oh, no, mother!" he answered with a melancholy smile. "For between ourselves she's much too stupid, or I'm much too wise. But if only we were grasshoppers and could al-

ways be dancing together, we should suit one another down to the ground."

His mother looked out over the water and sighed again.

"How is your friend the steward getting on now?" she asked.

"Ivar Holth? Oh, pretty well. But *we* don't determine how things are to go with us; our surroundings decide that."

"Oh, do you think so!" she exclaimed, stopping to look at him as she lifted her skirt to avoid the mud. "Then I think he must be all right now, with you looking after him as you do."

They turned and went back towards the town. Harold glanced at his mother. How simple a matter it all was to her! Ivar Holth had now been helped, he had food and clothing and social reinstatement, and nothing was wanting but old age insurance.

This was the mother who had sent him those serious letters in his joyous youth, and been his conscience whenever he had enjoyed himself. He did not then understand that her

seriousness suited her so uncommonly well. It gave her the best conscience in the world. She did what she had to do. The world, for her, was only what she herself managed to make better; the rest, humanity itself, or what lay outside the town and her programs, she might just show some interest in, but it was never of any great consequence, and robbed her of neither sleep nor appetite. That was the way to live a healthy life! If only she could have taught him that too!

The two men went off together. They left the steamer at the head of a fjord, and with knapsack on back started up the valley, ascended a slope on to a heath, and slept that first night in a sæter on the moor.

XVIII

DURING the first mild days of September they wandered over moor and heath. Behind them lay mountains with a fissure in them; and deep down at the bottom of this there was probably a fjord. As they ascended higher and higher, the heavy sea-air became lighter and lighter, until now they were breathing in only a pale blue sky. Oh, the days up there! So pure, so bathed in light and quivering with bright transparency. The ling on mountain and moorland, which had been green in the summer, was now rosy with bloom. An eagle hung high above a shining lake, which reflected the golden leafage of the dwarf trees surrounding it. The lowing of cattle could be heard, and flocks of horses lifted their heads to gaze at the two men. The report from the guns of grouse-shooters roused the echoes, and so still was the air that

the smoke lay motionless like pieces of cotton wool.

During the first few days Ivar Holth was in the best of spirits, always ready to talk, and interested in everything they came across. It did him good; fresh regions of his thoughts were reawakened, and he left off touching his everlasting wound; he still felt it, but put constraint upon himself, and vowed that there should be no more of it. He talked with the doctor about distant lands, and was always asking about Paris, about England, and about new discoveries in medicine. He told Harold a little of what he himself had read when he was head clerk—Schopenhauer, Stuart Mill, Pascal. It was such a pleasure to explore these healthy regions of his mind; he laughed at almost nothing; and though he might be tired, he was always asking whether he could not carry something for the doctor. They came down into little valleys where clusters of sæters stood, and where they got milk and something to eat, and either went on or slept a night there and went on the next morning.

Where were they going? They did not know. Ivar Holth was only going with the doctor, and the doctor had compass and map; they would come down somewhere to inhabited regions, and why should they hurry?

"My word! how hot it is here!" said Harold, rubbing his head with his cap.

"Yes, it's just like summer still!" said Ivar, mopping his face with his handkerchief.

When they were tired with walking, they lay down on the warm, red ling, with their knapsacks under their heads, and gazed up into the glorious blue symphony above them, with its golden disc that shone and burned so exceedingly. Their pulses beat gaily, and their chests rose easily at every breath they drew. On the bogs around they saw some little lakes, all so still that they seemed to be lying there thinking. And here they were. Was it not splendid to be alive?

The only misfortune was that neither of them could enjoy it any longer. They saw very little of the country through which they were passing; it no longer made any impres-

sion upon them. Ivar was already wishing to return. Far away in the west, out by the sea, *she* was still going about in the streets of a little town where he had been very unhappy; but he had already begun to wish he was back again. He had found out that this walking-tour was a trick of the doctor's to keep him away from home when she went away, and from seeing her the last few days she was there. He had been carried off by his benefactor, who meant well; but his benefactor did not understand that the farther he dragged him away from the town, the nearer did it come to him in a way. She—and the others—and his own bleeding wound, only became more alive the farther he went from them.

This evening he meant to go back. He could not help it if the doctor was offended, but he would go no farther this evening, and the next morning he would set out on his way home.

"I believe that's Hallingskarv over there," said Harold, stopping and looking through

his field-glasses. "There's newly-fallen snow on it, do you see? How it sparkles against the blue sky!"

"Yes, it must be Hallingskarv," said Ivar, borrowing the glasses and trying to see.

But he would turn back this evening.

Harold, too, was so astonished that this glorious mountain region where he had longed to be did not make any impression upon him now. He was free, the twelve hours of the day were his and his alone, he was healthy, strong, and still young; and here, under this dome of light which arched over the earth—was it not good to be here either? There was something he missed, not his patients, not his mother, not his home, but the newspapers. Those daily impulses to his mind that made him so wide-awake, that gave him an excuse for anger, indignation, or offence—they were not here. That was a pity. He missed his daily wrath. His thoughts searched for it, and he felt it was sad, and yet it always took him by surprise, again and again. Ah! when he was a young student, he used to look at a

landscape as other people listen to music, and hills and sea and sky flowed through him in joy and gladness. That was long ago. Now he was looking at Hallingskarv, but his real consciousness was busy with the indiarubber plantations in Bolivia, and with the new Morocco conflict, which would perhaps bring about a world-war; and he saw the war, saw the various nations of the earth move out, weapon in hand. And why? Because the industrial magnate required still more foreign soil, and therefore the nations were to begin to slay one another. There was not one in a hundred thousand who had any concern in it, but nevertheless they were to kill one another. This, O human mind, is thy present-day divinity!

"Where are we going to sleep tonight?" asked Ivar.

"I thought we could get as far as Oset Sæter. It's a boarding-house, and there'll probably be late papers there, so that we can see if there's anything new happening in the world."

"My foot's beginning to be bad," said Ivar, walking on sullenly and slowly. "I'm afraid I've got it chafed." And he pulled his knapsack higher up his back, and looked cross and tired.

"Let me look at your foot! We can sit down here, and you can take off your boot and stocking. I've got some plaster."

At Oset Ivar wanted to go back.

"Oh, nonsense!" said the doctor. "We'll both turn our faces homewards when we've taken in all the air we need. You've only got to come with me."

His will was strong. Ivar concealed his disappointment, his defiance, his impatience to return. He went on, but saw nothing of the regions they were traversing.

One evening they were up on the Valdres mountains, and were fishing in a lake whose waters reflected the stormy, yellow glow of the clouds, while opposite them rose the mountain Norkallen with its blue-black sides and tawny shoulders. Ivar rowed, and Harold had an otter out; but the fish would not bite,

for there was no wind. The board of the otter cut obliquely through the water like a little ship at the end of the line.

They were going to sleep at a sæter that night, where there were two dairy-maids. If only Ivar could be made to see that they were both young and pretty!

"Is your mother still living, Ivar?"

"No; mother died many years ago," said Ivar, turning his face away towards the west.

"Have you many brothers and sisters?"

"No; only one brother and Inga. He's in Alaska, working in a saw-mill."

"I think we'll row back now, and help the girls milk," said Harold, beginning to haul in his otter.

The two fair-haired girls looked at one another and laughed at these town-men who helped them to rake the dung out of the cow-shed, and light the fire on the hearth in the living-room.

Harold found a concertina on the shelf, and after supper the four of them made a regular dancing evening of it. Harold was cheerful

for the sake of his companion, and it really looked as if Ivar were waking up and holding the girls firmly round the waist as though he were really enjoying it. A flicker of youth must have shot up within him. If only it would last!

They slept together in a little room, on a high mattress with a coverlet over it. "If only he would go in to the girls!" thought Harold; but Ivar lay down, put his hand over his eyes, and pretended he was asleep.

"You who were to fill his mind with fresh-air thoughts on this tour," said Harold to himself, "you're only taking him with you and going on thinking about your own affairs. And he hides his soul from you. It's a case of making a diagnosis when the patient lies to you, or of sympathising with a misfortune, comforting in sorrow, when your friend covers it over with words and smiles.

"And we two are wandering over the most beautiful regions in the world, and our minds are closed to it all. What will be the end of the world-conflict? It follows my steps over

the moors like a dark mirage, and he, I suppose, has an even darker one; and the sun shines in vain upon us both.

“We and the others—all the hunted beings of today—we have lost the power to be thrilled by anything natural and beautiful in the world. Close your eyes on the moor, and what do you see? Lay your ear to the warm, flowering ling, and what do you feel? Can you be intoxicated by the joy of the moment? The leaves that fall now in September—they can. The May-fly can. The child can. But you cannot!

“Your home is the newspaper, your normal state of mind is vexation over the evil in the world, and the day’s work is only for the purpose of making the time pass.

“If one could only kneel some day in deep adoration of something! At the back of everything there must surely be a fundamental soul to the universe, of which you are a ray! Shine then! But how?

“There’s some one lying beside you, isn’t there? Where will you find a little light to

fill him with, so that he does not fall into some catastrophe?

“Are you asleep, Ivar?”

Ivar’s hand was still covering his eyes, and he seemed to be sound asleep.

There was an intolerable number of gnats. The little humming imps approached with their irritating song, and settled on cheek, or forehead, or lip.

Towards morning Harold got up quietly, redressed, and went out.

The morning air was chill. He heard the ptarmigan calling in the thicket, probably gathering her brood together after they had been scattered the day before by the guns. His feet made a dark path across the frosty grass, a cow-bell moved in the long cowshed, there was a sound of running streams among the hills, and the red light of day began to tinge the east.

Harold sat down upon a stone, and supported his chin upon his hands. It was so peaceful and quiet out here now. There was a peculiar pleasure in knowing that the tourists

had left the mountains, and that the boarding-houses were closed; the mountain plateau was for the solitary wanderer, and for the winter which would soon cover it all with snow.

An infinite peace rested upon the pale, silent morning landscape. The noisy brooks would soon be dumb ice, but now they babbled. And they were certain of a spring when they would come to life again. What are you?

"You live," he said to himself. "You are alive now. You have the will to the infinite, but you are incapable of transforming this feeling of infinity into pleasure, into worldly delights, into harmony with the great festal rhythm of the universe. But surely that was what was intended? That was what we all should do. Otherwise—what otherwise?"

"If you yourself cannot, then you must take this young man with the soft mind, and lead him there. He really has a great deal of music in his soul—that much you have noticed. Do you think it will be of any use? Is it in your power to re-create him, make him

strong and rich and great? If so—well, if so, there is salvation for us all. We are of the same material. Every single human being is a little mankind in himself. Do you believe in it? Do you remember your old dream of the united march—towards what? We surely have to go somewhere? There is a red dawn for which we are making, and of which all religions are a reflection. Do you believe that some day mankind will arrive at the sacred hour when they will have time to sit quietly down and let the hymn of the universe roll jubilantly through their thoughts and minds? Do you believe that? Otherwise—what otherwise?”

The sun rose. The mountains stood a pale copper-color against the sky, the lakes reflected rosy clouds, the dew upon grassy slopes and knolls turned to gold dust. He would go in now and make coffee, and take some to the girls before they got up.

Then the two men continued their wanderings—two gray figures moving over mountain and moorland, in rain and mist and wind, be-

neath sun and stars, each accompanied by his own mirage, those scattered strips of the world that were their life.

"Hullo! there's Jotunheim!" exclaimed Harold, getting out his field-glasses again. They gazed out over an ocean of billowing blue and white mountains, towards a giant billow in the far north, which seemed to foam up into heaven itself. "Oh, yes!" said Ivar. "That's Jotunheim sure enough!"

There were only a few days now before she would be going away, and here was he, going farther and farther away from her. He would never see her again. Without her the town would close over him like an ice-cellar, full of evil influences with oblique, bloodshot eyes. It made him sick to think about it. He felt he could go no farther; his feet refused to carry him.

His excuse was pain in his knees, in his stomach, in his head. Harold scolded, joked and told amusing stories.

"Let's sit down here," he said, "and have a pipe. Do you know, I was once staying at

Karasjok, and that's where love-making's carried on in fur coats. Young people make love out of doors under the rays of the northern lights in a temperature of fifty degrees below freezing, she in a fur coat, and he in a fur coat. They embrace in fur coats, kiss in fur coats, and recline on the snow in fur coats. Perhaps it's snowing, but they don't notice it and get buried under the snow; and the next morning the fathers have to go about with long sticks to poke into the snow, to find the various loving couples. What do you think of that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They came one day to a place from which they could see down into Gudbrandsdal. It was a new district. There lay sunburnt houses with smoke ascending from their chimneys. They came down to Lillehammer, and went over the folk-museum at Maihaugen, where they saw the old farms, the comfortable old-time homes from up the valley.

"Tomorrow is the day she's leaving," thought Ivar; but he kept it to himself, for

now he hated the man who was dragging him along with him.

They were standing in the old Gudbrandsdal living-room, with its open hearth and leaded window-panes, and everything in it handmade. Harold sat down on a chair and looked about him, absorbed in all that he saw, drinking it in, hearing, as it were, the echo of forgotten tones, which it was a delight to listen to again.

"I say, Ivar, do you know what this is? It's a real human home; the people actually lived in their own home. In the present day we may have our own house and our own furniture, but all the same it's a hotel we live in; there's nothing made with our own hands, nothing born out of our own dreams; it's all bought with money, and brought from far and near. But here! The man himself or his father made it all in peaceful hours. Perhaps a little girl in a red petticoat ran chattering about the room and laughed at a shaving, and the man made this childish chatter into a story, and carved it on a soup-ladle.

The grown-up daughter wove variegated figures into draperies while she dreamed of the lover who would surely come some day; and the woven picture was hung on the wall in the best room. And the whole became a home for people, a shelter for the mind, a frame for the soul. Their horizon extended probably no farther than to the confines of their farm, about which they were at law with their neighbor; but here, as a set-off, there was a personality. Dear me! how happy those people were! They didn't read the papers. They didn't care a hang about anything in the wide world. They had a home!

"That's what you must have, Ivar. You must marry and get a home. I've never had one and never shall have; but you're young still, and you must get hold of a pretty girl, confound you!"

It was the worst thing he could have said to his companion just then. Ivar smiled a bitter smile. "I! A home!" was all he said; but he thought: "That home will be a dark one!"

Then they started on their homeward journey.

“It’s too late now!” thought Ivar. “I shall never see her again!”

XIX

WHEN the west wind, accompanied by the autumn rains, rolled volumes of dark cloud in from the sea, it tore across the bay with such impetuosity that chain-cables broke, boats were driven ashore, and huge waves washed right up to the houses. The old landing-stages stood upon their piles in the sea like fabled animals that dared not venture out any farther; but they creaked in the long October nights, while the hoisting-tackle shrieked, and tiles flew about the town and people who were out late had their umbrellas turned inside out and were obliged to cling to the house-walls for support. Far out in the west could be heard the dull sound of the ocean itself as it dashed itself once more upon the rocks and islands as if to tear them away. "It's to be hoped we shan't have bad news from the sea tonight!" old people said as they put out their lamps and crept into bed to dream of ship-

wreck and wreckage drifting ashore, and of cries for help from the darkness far out. These were familiar dreams in this town, whose sons were always on the sea.

On an evening such as this, Ivar Holth was sitting in the little room in which the four children were sleeping, the youngest girl with her doll upon her arm. It was not far from midnight, and he should have been in bed himself; but he knew he would not be able to sleep. It was best to keep his eyes open, for then he saw the children in their innocent sleep; and if he shut them he saw all the time the town where *she* no longer was, the town with the distorted face, which jeered at him because he had to be there without knowing her to be close by—the town with the hundreds of eyes that only blinked at him and wished him ill. He had heard through street-boys that he was now called the chimpanzee, Dr. Mark's monkey. Well, it was strange that that man should have enticed him away those last few days she was here. Suppose it were an experiment! Suppose he had only wanted

to read his expression and observe his sufferings! Suppose it were only another experiment when he appointed him steward, an experiment on the animal, an inoculation of the chimpanzee! He could not bear to think of it, but he ground his teeth and clenched his fists. If it was true he would—he would like to go out to the white house and—and do something dreadful.

But today he had had another experience. Lawyer Gundahl had come up to him in the street and begged him to join a choral society. “You sing like a thrush, young man; I remember that from long ago. And you’ll be able to put feeling into your singing, for you’re animated by an ardor that the rest of us lack, ha, ha!”

“Many thanks!” said Ivar, and tried to escape, but the other held on to him.

“I envy you, young man. Yes, seriously I would gladly exchange with you. We others all have our hearts filled with professional jealousies, hatred, deceit, and the gossip of a little town; but you—you have a sacred sor-

row, like Dante, or Petrarch, or Byron. There's only one thing I don't understand, though, and that is that you can submit to his beating her. He comes home drunk, and the neighbors hear the blows and her wails; and that even now when she's expecting a child! Well, well, she's gone now, but——"

"Good-bye!" said Ivar, tearing himself away.

He was sitting now thinking that perhaps the lawyer had spoken the truth. Now and then he shook his head. It seemed unlikely, and yet just now he was unable to believe anything except what was evil.

Beat her! And she was gone! But the captain was still living in their old house; he was to be there another week.

Did he beat her? Her! And she was expecting a baby. She! And with him! With him!

But it was not that, on the whole, that hurt him most; it was a deep, painful wonder as to when it—when it took place.

If he had had a friend so dear that he could

have confided everything to him, everything, and asked for counsel and help for all the sorrows in the world, he could not have gone to him with this. The very best of friends would have burst out laughing. "When it happened? Ha, ha! You must really ask *them* about that." It was ridiculous, of course, and yet it hurt him so, and burnt deeper and deeper into the tenderest part of his heart. When did it happen?

Perhaps one evening when he had sat upon the steps and felt the exquisite pain of knowing that she was undressing upstairs, that she had got into bed and drawn the clothes over her splendid, young body, that *he* came up and that they were together. And he himself had sat below, the window was darkened and they two were alone with one another up there.

When did it happen? It was as if a knife were driven into him each time, so that his face was distorted with pain. When—when did it happen?

The children slept on, sometimes talking in

their sleep. A small lamp was burning. The town was dark and filled with the noises of the autumn storm, and the night was long.

What should he do with the children? For this could not go on. What in the world should he do with Inga's little ones?

He felt that he was drifting towards something terrible. The town should have its way; he was no longer able to resist. One after another the things to which he had clung gave way; the doctor was the last. If people took him for a chimpanzee, they should have what they wanted.

But the children!

Oh, if he could only sleep! What would he not give to be a child himself! There they lay in their patched nightgowns, dreaming perhaps of their mother.

He felt himself so strangely unworthy to sit beside them. He was defiled with the mire in which the town had plunged him, last of all Dr. Mark. It would never do for him to be with these little ones every day, to have them climbing on to his knee, putting their arms

round his neck, and calling him Uncle. No, no, it would never do!

And it was not easy to say what might happen now.

Tomorrow he would send the housekeeper with all four out to Asköen to his old father, who lived in a little cottage there on his pension as parish clerk. There they would be safe whatever happened.

Perhaps, then, it was the last evening he would sit beside their beds where they lay sleeping safely and happily. There was nothing to be done about that.

The next morning he dressed as usual, and in the afternoon he went with the children and the housekeeper down to the ship that was to take them out to Asköen. The storm had abated somewhat, and the distance was not great.

"My father has written for them," he said to the woman; and he handed her a good sum of money to be given to the old man. "Good-bye, children!" And he kissed them all four,

and gave each of them a packet of good things.

When they were gone he set out for the hospital, but, on arrival there, turned away without going in. He could not bring himself to see the doctor again, and he did not know what would happen if he met him in the street. He wandered about among the hills at the back of the town, looking at the white horses in the bay, and letting the rain beat in his face. When he got home at dusk, there was nothing to eat, and no one in the house, and all the rooms were cold. All he had had that day was coffee in the morning, but he was certainly not hungry now either.

He locked the door and pulled down the blinds, and sitting on a chair beside the stove, stared into the darkness. All the vultures of his thoughts attacked the tenderest places; but no good feeling succeeded in coming sufficiently near to be anything to cling to.

When did it happen?

Chimpanzee!

Steps outside became less frequent. He

would not take the trouble to look at the clock. Perhaps it was late. Perhaps it was midnight or past.

Some one opened the garden gate, and steps approached. He recognised them, and involuntarily grasped the chair as if to hold himself tight. There was a knock at the door, but he did not move; then Dr. Mark's voice called: "Are you in, Holth? Are you ill? Let me in if you're at home! You know it's me, Holth! Holth! Are you there?"

Oh, that voice that had once been so dear to him! That man who had once saved him! Chimpanzee! Had he come to try a new experiment?

Now he was knocking at the window, but Ivar sat motionless. The doctor spoke again. "Are you there, Ivar?" There was a long pause, and then the steps receded, and there was only the storm out there in the night.

At last Ivar rose, went into the kitchen and put a box of matches into his pocket. He passed out into the passage, put on his coat and hat, and went out, locking the door after

him and putting the key in his pocket, and then set out aimlessly for the town. He had forgotten his umbrella, but that did not matter; and he had to keep a continual hold on his hat to prevent it from flying away. The sea roared in the harbor where the ships were tossing on the great waves. Most of the houses were dark as he passed them. Yes, here was the laughing-stock of the town again, and the hundreds of eyes had closed for a moment; but tomorrow they would open again, and they would have something to rejoice over when their glance fell upon him in the street—perhaps.

He did not know how he had come out to the white house. Was it through a dim instinct to clutch at a straw? The doctor's window might be lighted up, and perhaps he ought to go up and ask if it were really true that—Oh, but one doesn't ask about such things, for it's only ridiculous. Things like that hurt, but one says nothing. One feels lonely each time the snake-bites become swol-

len, but one is only betrayed if one is stupid and complains, even to a good friend.

But the white house was dark, too. No! Upstairs there was a light behind the dark blind. The doctor must be reading in bed as usual. But knock? Go up there? The chimpanzee indeed!

The town slept. A solitary policeman paced the quays in the storm, and he saw a dark figure hasten past with collar turned up and hat pulled down over his eyes. A doctor perhaps, who has been rung up, or some one going home from a festive gathering; for who else would be out in such a night?

The west wind came in gusts across the bay, and played with the tiles on the roofs; and up in the mountains it began to whirl round as if trying to find some hole through which to make its escape. But every place was closed, and it divided and rose into the air or returned to the town, blowing all its trumpets, then met a relative from the sea, and joined it in a new dance.

Carpenter Wium was just coming ashore

from a toddy-party with the steward of the *North Star*, which was on her way south with fish-oil. Outside the chemist's—on whose first floor Captain Harrang lived—Wium stopped to set his hat more firmly on his head and to steady himself on his legs. "Look there, ladies and gentlemen! It's shining, it's smoking! It surely isn't a fire?" But when a flame really flickered out, he pulled himself up, threw out his hand and made a speech. "Ladies and gentlemen, this will be a valuation business. It must be insured in 'Store-brand,' so I shall get a job. Put it out? No good trying. The house was an old one, I know. Ha! there's the flame! It may become serious. Rome's burning! And the watchmen are asleep!" And suddenly he began to run, shouting: "Fire! Fire!"

Here and there a window was opened and heads were put out. "Fire!" they repeated, and shut the window. People began to run down the stairs and to telephone "Fire! Fire!" all over the town.

XX

THERE was an abundance of inflammable materials at the chemist's. The barrels of spirits and ether caught fire, and gigantic flames rose into the air accompanied by reports. The west wind was ready to carry the sparks about, and before the fire-engines arrived, half the block of buildings was in flames.

It grew light in all the narrow alleys where half-dressed people began to run about in distress, one, in her bewilderment, carrying a chair, another with a child wrapped up in a blanket; and all over the town there were cries for wife, husband, mother, or money. Up the hill, where as yet only volumes of smoke were rolling in, furniture was being dragged out into the street—bedding, pictures and butter-tubs, one on the top of the other; but the next moment there was a shower of burning frag-

ments, and every one dropped what he held in his hand, and fled.

In a short space of time the entire town was in a tumult, cries, shrieks, words of command from the firemen and from persons in authority, all intermingled. Bearers made their way through a crowd with a stretcher on which lay an old cripple, and a woman with her newborn child was dragged away on a hand-cart by her two little girls. From a gun and cartridge-maker's shop, where there were cases of ammunition and dynamite, a cannonade was suddenly heard, and sparks rose high into the air, while windows rattled as if there were an earthquake.

The old landing-stages stood trampling on the waves which splashed up to the doors of the ground-floor warehouses; and it was so light all over the town that the inscription "J. M. Randers & Son—Herrings & Fish," in large black letters, could be read on one of the walls. The wind, with its capricious gyrations, had now covered half the town with a sheet of flame and smoke, and was beginning

to send a shower of sparks over the quays where the *North Star*, with her sleeping crew, lay. As the men awoke and stumbled up on deck, flames burst from the barrels of fish-oil; and before the engines could be started, and the large vessel manoeuvred out from the quay, she was alight in several places. Hoses were turned on, captain and officers darted about among the men, shouting, and a commercial traveller jumped overboard and swam ashore; and before they had gone very far, both crew and officers took to the boats, the engineer forgetting in his confusion to stop the engine, so that the forsaken ship moved on towards the dark bank of clouds in the west, a mass of flame and smoke that lighted up the white crests of the surrounding billows.

The other ships in the harbor also endeavored with all speed to get away from the burning town and the sparks that were raining down over half the bay, and to keep out of the way of this ill-omened ship, which was still plunging aimlessly along, but might perhaps drift in again. She was leaning more

and more over to one side now, enveloped in flickering flames, and at last, against the background of open sea, looked like a whirling mass of fire and smoke.

Harold would have liked to go with his mother to her school, but the hospital was the more important. He begged his mother to leave the town at once, and then dashed off. As he passed the wine-merchant's, his hair was singed by the flames; but sailors and the riff-raff of the town were lying in the street, licking up the yellow streams of wine and spirits that were flowing from the burning stores. In shipowner Prebensen's large white house there was such confusion that an old washerwoman came running out with a large red down quilt, which she meant at any rate to save from the flames.

Nearer the hospital there lay a large petroleum-barge which had already caught fire, and each time a barrel burst there was a dull explosion that seemed as if it would bring down the mountains. It was lighter now than in the daytime, but with a strange, flickering

storm-light, blue and red and flame-yellow, that made all faces look like those of maniacs.

There were two people, however, standing up on the hills, who had escaped thither in good time. They were Lawyer Gundahl and his wife. He had brought his portfolio of documents with him; and her gray cat lay safely in the covered basket which she carried in her hand. The rest was well insured, so what did it matter? And they now stood in the storm, looking down at the burning town, so occupied in gazing that they were speechless and perhaps unaware that they were holding one another's hands.

Fru Mark had not left the town, however; and there was something of greater importance to her than her school. This was a little collection of twenty pictures for which she had found a room in the Good Templar premises. She had hoped that in time it might become an art-gallery for the town; but now when she got there, the whole of the long, yellow-painted building was enveloped in flames. Hardly knowing what she did, she was going

to rush in, but strong arms held her back, and she turned away; and farther on in the town she sank down on to a doorstep and began to weep.

Far up on the mountain-side lay the little farm with its two small buildings on a patch of green, looking like a picture hanging on a wall. The two old people had crept out and were standing, each, for safety's sake, holding a cow by the collar, and gazing down into the accursed town below in the hollow that was now beginning to fill with flame.

In the stillness of night at the hospital, little Marie lay in her frame, with "Synnöve Solbakken" under her pillow. She heard noises in the other wards, but she knew she had to keep quite still. Then doors began to bang, and people ran up and down the passages. Two women in the same room as she sat up and took up the cry of "Fire!" One of them had recently given birth to a child, but she sprang out of bed. Little Marie was infected by their fear, moved, and sat up. It gave her great pain in her shoulder and back,

but she stumbled out of bed, dragging with her the frame to which she was bound, and then fell on the floor, crying that she wanted to go home, and calling for her mother.

Windows were thrown open, and terrified white forms leaned out as if with the intention of leaping down. The sisters ran about trying to keep order, but they themselves were bewildered. All the patients had left their beds, the dying, delirious, some recently operated on, who should have lain still because of their bandages—all stumbled about, fell, rose and stumbled on again, driven by this weird light from the burning town.

“Here comes the doctor!” came the cry at last through the corridors. “Get into bed and don’t worry! The doctor’s coming!”

Harold saw at once that the hospital for the moment was not threatened, but the wind might veer round at any moment, and how were more than a hundred patients to be rescued in a town where all the houses would soon lie in ashes? How was he to get hold in a hurry of people to carry them out, and what

was to be done with them? He dashed to the telephone and rang up the police-station. There was no answer: the station was probably in flames. To the fire-station—no answer; to the seamen's office—no answer. Next time there was no answer from the Central even; every one must have fled, or they were paralysed with fear, or occupied in saving their belongings.

"Oh, doctor!"—it was Sister Alma who came running in.

"Where's the assistant physician?"

"We haven't seen him."

"And the porter?"

"He's here; but the steward, Ivar Holth"—

She saw that the doctor suddenly turned as white as a sheet, through fear other than that of the fire; and for a second she stood motionless, but then had to take hold of something to support herself.

Harold sent the porter out to bring in one of the vessels that had anchored farther out in the bay. "But as quick as you can!"

The old gray-beard hesitated.

"But, doctor! A little boat in such a sea!"

"Make haste, confound you!" thundered the doctor, and the porter hurried off.

A fresh gust of wind had brought a shower of burning fragments down upon the roof. The patients would have to be removed instantly. Harold had only three sisters to help him, for every one from the kitchen department had fled. The stretchers were brought in, and he himself went from room to room to endeavor to calm their occupants. Most of them were induced to return to their beds, but with a few he was compelled to use force. "Quiet now! Don't excite yourselves!"

Would the porter manage to get a boat? The patients would have to be carried down into the garden in the meantime, despite their thus having to lie in the open air.

"Bring a stretcher here, Sister Alma!" And with brief orders he set the others to work.

"Is she to be saved—is she to be saved, and not me?" was the cry from some of the beds, when the burning fragments could be heard beating against the windows. The confusion

began again, Harold thundered, and one after another the stretchers were borne down the stairs and out into the garden. The storm raged out there, blankets were carried away by the wind, and the patients screamed; but they had to be deposited there and left to themselves in the meantime. If only a boat would come!

The yard had become one huge bed in which the patients tossed and wailed, when a steam whistle was heard from the beach. The porter came to their aid, and a couple of sailors from the large fishing-steamer that he had brought, also came to help. Harold was giving his orders; but the next moment darted into the house again, where the flames were beginning to burst forth.

Day was dawning, a pale dawn coming up from the sea; and stretchers carrying something white beneath fluttering coverings, were visible passing in constant succession down to the ship. Now and then one of these out-stretched figures would raise his head and shriek in delirium; some got away and tried to

flee; while others had been allowed to stagger along, half dressed and barefooted in the mud and the icy blast.

"The roof's caught now!" said Harold, as he and Sister Alma came down once more with a white burden upon their stretcher.

On board the boat the captain and mate and a sister were busily engaged in arranging the patients at the bottom of the hold, where they had spread tarpaulins with blankets over them.

After the house was enveloped in smoke and flame, Harold once more dashed in and went through all the rooms to see if any one had chanced to be left. In a room on the second floor he thought he saw something move under a bed, and going to it he got hold of a foot, and dragged out the pale Norwegian-American who had some time before undergone an operation for hernia.

"What in the world are you up to?"

"Let me alone!" cried the man, struggling to get free.

"Nonsense!"

"I don't want to live any longer. Why mayn't I die?"

"Rubbish!" The doctor had brought him out to the stairs, but they were blazing. He rushed to the window, opened it, and, seeing that the yard was full of people, he shouted: "Hullo there! Set up the fire-ladder here!"

Some of them ran round the corner of the house, others crying: "Look! There's the doctor! Up there, on the second floor!"

"A ladder! Quick! The stairs are on fire! A ladder! A ladder!"

Some one came round the corner shouting: "The ladder's padlocked to the wall! Where's the key?"

"Harold!" cried some one from below. It was Fru Mark who had come up, and was standing wringing her hands. "He'll be burnt alive! For God's sake, help him! Help him!"

"It's impossible!" people cried, running hither and thither. "The stairs are on fire!"

"Have you got a rope then?" Harold called down calmly. "Make a knot at one end and throw it up!" But at the same moment he re-

membered that there was a fire-escape rope coiled up under the bed in each room. This he managed to get hold of and uncoil with one hand, while with the other he kept a firm hold of his captive, then tied the rope about his waist, and after lifting him on to the window-sill, slowly lowered him to the ground.

“Look! Look!” cried the people below.

The man came sailing down, his white shirt fluttering round him, his thin, naked legs kicking wildly, and his arms waving. He shrieked, but he slowly reached the ground, where some one took charge of him.

The roof now fell in with a crash. Harold could feel the fire on the back of his neck, and a puff of smoke blew into his face. After feeling where the ring of the rope was fastened, he climbed out on to the window-ledge, took a firm hold of the rope and lowered himself over the edge.

“Look! There’s the doctor!”

“Harold! Harold! Harold!”

They saw him hanging up there by his hands, and feeling about with his legs for the

rope. He found it, but it looked as if it were already on fire, and he himself was yellow in the light of the flames; but he gradually came lower and lower, anxiously watched by the crowd. Not until then did the fire-engines arrive.

Up on the hills a man was wandering about in mackintosh and sou'wester, and a stick in his hand. It was Dr. Prahl. His family had been brought to a place of safety, and he saw it was useless to help to save things, so he only gazed at the burning town, pale and with a strange look in his eyes, and his whole body in a cold sweat. He had thrown off his customary look of importance, for he felt as though he were to blame for this, as if he had set fire to the town by his own evil prediction; and he did not cry in triumph: "Was I not right?" He would like to have fled from the fact of his being right. He had never imagined it could be so terrible to be right.

The doctor! Mark! He must be helped! He must help him now!

But just as he got there, the walls of the

hospital fell in, and people fled in all directions; and on the bay, the ship with the patients and the doctor on board was tossing on the great waves.

When the sun rose upon the hills, parties of half-dressed people were still to be seen struggling along in the wind beside the bay and up the little valley. Carts full of bedding and children upset, and here and there, startled by the flames, a horse would run away with the wreckage of a cart behind it, sweeping everything out of its way as it dashed along. Fat shopkeepers might be seen perspiring behind wheelbarrows where they had in all haste deposited a safe, and wealthy, pampered ladies, with hair flying in the wind, struggled along with one child in their arms and another on their back—everywhere people fleeing, everywhere screams and lamentation, and over all the great masses of cloud rolling in from the sea, and when above the town becoming as red as if the very sky were on fire.

Among the fugitives a name began to be

called—two names. The fire must have been the work of an incendiary! They turned and saw their houses swallowed up in the flames, and again a name was called. It must be he! And the other who protected him? Ah! the other! Look! There goes the school! Away, away!

XXI

ON the mountain plateau between East and West Norway, beside the line from Bergen to Christiania, there stand some large hotels where young people from half the countries in Europe gather for the purposes of winter sports. One day they all shut themselves up in the large hall because everything outside is hidden by driving snow; the next there is the bluest of skies, and the sun tinges with red the white plateaux and mountain-tops and the great frozen lakes. The hotels then become empty, and hundreds of skiers disperse in all directions over the white snowfields, some apparently vanishing into thin air, but all returning towards evening, laughing and shouting, with ruddy faces. It is as though both lungs and soul have breathed in that clear, unending sky.

In the middle of November, Sister Alma alighted from the train up there, and faced

that immense winter scene. The huge masses of snow had been swept up round the station, and the air was keen and cold, causing her involuntarily to raise her hand to her face. She had come from the west, and it was still early morning. She knew that Fru Mark was staying with her son at a little boarding-house on the hill a short way off, where the guests were few and the living simple. A boy from this house had met the train; and when he had put her trunk on his sledge, they both set off, the snow crackling and creaking under their feet.

How should she find these two? How was he, she wondered. She remembered him on the night of the fire and the two days and nights on board the ship before the half-demented patients were brought in safety to the neighboring town. And afterwards in Bergen, where she had stayed with mother and son at a hotel, and he had walked up and down his room all night. He had grown gray and thin. He would not go out; he began to be afraid of seeing people; and the two women were at their wits' end.

At last his mother had persuaded him to come up here with her. But since then there had been bitter attacks upon him in the papers. The responsibility was laid upon him, no one being satisfied with the fact that Ivar Holth had appeared one day, and of his own accord delivered himself up to the police, and that he had now been sentenced to several years' hard labor.

In the boarding-house no one was to be seen except a couple of maids; but a message was brought to the effect that Sister Alma could go up to Fru Mark.

When she entered the little room, Fru Mark was sitting at the dressing-table combing her snow-white hair which flowed over her shoulders. Being November, it was dark until far on into the day, and a candle was burning on each side of the white-framed looking-glass.

"Why, my dear, I thought you weren't coming until tomorrow!" said Fru Mark, extending her hand.

Sister Alma would have liked to fall on her

friend's neck, but at the moment she lacked courage. There was always something about this woman that seemed to say: "You may approach me, but not too near."

"How are you getting on here?"

"Oh, fairly well, thank you."

"Is he sleeping any better?"

"It's want of sleep that is the difficulty."

"But I suppose he doesn't always keep his bed?"

"In the daytime he generally lies on it dressed. Unfortunately he doesn't seem well when he's up." And the older woman sighed.

"Shall I do your hair for you?"

"Yes, if you will."

While Sister Alma stood behind the other's chair and wound the silvery plaits in a coil low down at the back of her head, she happened to say: "What's become of that beautiful silver comb that you used to wear in your hair?"

Fru Mark smiled a melancholy smile into the mirror. "Do you think I had any thought for such things that night?"

"I remember you used to wear it every day. People said it was—it was all that was left of the rich lady of the manor."

Fru Mark smiled again. "Well, anyway, I don't know what there can be left of her now."

"Oh, when you have a son like the doctor?"

"Yes, and have brought him up as I have done." Fru Mark grew serious, and seemed unwilling to look at herself in the glass.

"Brought him up? What do you mean by that?"

After a short pause the other answered: "I've sat here alone with my knitting, and had plenty of time to think things over. Harold was so happy and merry when he was young; and I—I have been quite without understanding of such things for many, many years. I wrote him letters and admonitions about wrong and unhappiness and mercy and all that. I fancy it must have set its stamp upon his life; but there has been no joy either for himself or for others.

"And I myself, Alma! I got so many things started there for the improvement of

the people, both the school, and a little art, and the theatre, and the technical college; but I sit here wondering whether people were really any the better for it.

"Now I wish I could begin the bringing-up of my son over again from the beginning; but it's a little late in the day!"

"Don't you think you look rather too much at the dark side of things? I'm certain the doctor is of another opinion."

"The doctor! Yes!" Fru Mark rose. "You know the doctor. He is never serious. He keeps you at a distance with a kind of gaiety. We have become such strangers to one another as that!"

Later that morning Fru Mark went into her son's room alone, and a peculiar instinct prevented her from telling him that Sister Alma had come. She wanted to try once more whether, after all, she was not the only person who could help him to pull himself together again.

Harold had been up and had dressed, and was now lying as usual in his shirt-sleeves on

the bed, reading a book which he held in one hand, while with the other he incessantly stroked his grayish beard.

"Is that you, mother? Good morning!"
He held out his hand.

"How are you today, Harold?"

"Splendid! I go on improving. Last night I slept like a log."

Fru Mark could see by his red eyelids that this was not true.

"But for that matter I'm not at all ill, mother. It's only this laziness. I soon shan't have the energy to dress and undress myself. I wonder if there aren't machines that do that for you."

"Now, Harold, what do you think of getting up and going out today? You who were once a prize-winner in ski-races——"

"Well, mother, shall we two go ski-ing together?"

"Oh, nonsense! You know quite well we didn't learn such things when I was young!"

"There you are!" he said playfully. "It's

just as I say—no one'll go with me; so I may just as well stay in my comfortable bed."

Fru Mark sighed, sat down and looked at him. He had glanced at his book again, but now turned his head and smiled at her.

"Is it really true, Harold, that—that it isn't possible for me—to help you to find pleasure again in living?" Her voice sounded like a sob.

"Living? Why, I'm living splendidly, mother!"

"I mean . . . I mean that you may be really happy again."

"Oh, happy! We-ell—that's another matter. It may be my own fault." He sighed faintly, and laying aside his book, put his hands under his head and looked up at the ceiling. "In that case you'd have to make the world into something different from what it is now, mother, or teach me to be something for myself, and that's what you're well on the way to do. I get brighter every day. I was humming a tune just now as I lay here."

Fru Mark sighed and looked out of the

window. "I do wonder why you never will speak seriously to me."

He laughed and lay for a little while pulling his moustache. Then he said: "Don't you understand that it'll take some time for me to find out what road I shall now have to take? It's by no means easy. We've got to make the best we can of the world, such as it is, either with wine and women, or—or with a belief—hm!—or with a rope, or by putting all one's dreams on the other side of the Styx, but for that, unfortunately, I'm not strong enough in geography. Well, well. . . . Have you remembered to send that money to Ivar Holth's sister?"

"I sent it yesterday," said his mother, rising.

"Mother!" said Harold, holding out his hand again. "Today you're to go out for a drive. I've ordered a sledge. You can put my fur coat on the top of yours. Don't say no! It'll do you so much good."

XXII

THERE were now two women whose only thoughts were to do Harold Mark good.

Sister Alma was not often in his room, but he heard her step about the house, and it was a pleasantly quiet step; and there was a harmoniousness about her manner that made it soothing to know that she was near.

There was a piano in the dining-room, which was next to Harold's room, and up to the present it had been torture to him whenever any one sat down to play there. Now it was different. In the long, moonlight evenings Sister Alma sat there and let forth golden streams of sound that were for him, and him only.

He did not know that every time she seated herself at the piano, there was something definite she wanted to try; but she never had the courage, although she had practiced it every day of late.

His mother began to look cheerful when she came into his room, and she had so many amusing stories to tell. It was as though she exerted herself to show him little glimpses of a world that was so much brighter than the one into which he lay gazing. It moved him, almost to tears. He really felt he would like to get up and help her, so that she should not strive in vain.

One evening at about six he was lying as usual on his bed, with his hands under his head. The lamp had not been lighted, but the moon shone through the frost-covered window-panes onto the floor. The stove was burning, and in the next room he heard Sister Alma seat herself at the piano, and after a few preliminary chords, begin to play.

Harold closed his eyes. This music brought scenes before his mind's eye. He had had so much time to lie and look into himself and act plays in his head. Now the walls glided away, and he once more began to wander about in a strange throng.

There came Dr. Prah! and all the wise ones.

Dreamer, he says. Reality has no room for dreamers. Belief in mankind—well, see if that is not a crime! Just see how it worked!

Harold saw the burning town, and began to tremble. Sister Alma played on.

That is right. Dreams are a crime. Realities are money, robbery, police, prisons, and war. The rest is nonsense. You who try to take a share in everything that happens, you with the wounded, bleeding world's-conscience, you stretch yourself upon the cross and suffer and bleed like a fool. You help no one. Reality continues its course.

With that world-picture you are to get up now and begin to live.

Faith! Very well. The only thing that can save me is faith. Faith in what? In an invisible ruler, who in his wisdom lets the world go as it goes?

In progress? In mankind? What am I to believe in?

Thank you! Now she has stopped in there. Not even she and her music can tell me what I am really to believe.

There was silence for a moment, and then she began again. What? Surely he knew that! It was—yes, it was Beethoven, and the piano arrangement of the Ninth Symphony. Would she get through it?

Cautiously and hesitatingly her hands seemed to touch the sacred thing; but she went on, and began, a little fearfully, but always gaining in freedom, to unfold that universal hymn, which brings together all the races of mankind to rejoice in life.

Harold lay pulling his moustache and smiling ironically. But he was so curiously anxious to see whether she could manage it. He knew that her heart was beating with fear that she might be playing in vain now, too. It was as though she came towards him in white sacerdotal robes, and held out to him a bowl of sacred fire.

Would she stumble? He closed his eyes. He wanted to stretch out his hands and help her.

Ah, that man has lived! He who created that music has walked this earth—like you!

Have you included him in your world-picture?
Is it no comfort to you that he has lived?

And the others—are there not more?

You see only the millions of Judas-souls with steel, and blood, and money, and betrayal—those that prophesy evil and are always right. But are there not others besides them?

Do you see that monk from the plains of Iran, sitting under a tree and dreaming the dream of mankind? Has he lived in vain? And the others?

A slave rises in Rome with a star on his brow; one of his disciples becomes emperor of the world. In Judæa the son of a carpenter stands with some fishermen round him, and takes water out of a well. Over the Italy of the Renaissance rises a figure with a chisel in his hand; in England a poet builds himself a world-throne; and in France there stands an old man with toothless mouth, holding aloft a torch whose light flashes down through all ages. Is it no consolation to you that these men have lived?

They were dreamers like you. You are

nothing, but you may surely bow down to them. They carried a world-picture in their breast, of which they wanted to know the meaning—like you. They were powerless against an armor-plated world—like you. They suffered on a world-cross—like you.

They were dreamers, and yet they are the torch-bearers in the procession of mankind; and it is owing to them that there is not night over the earth.

Perhaps a dreamers' day may come, when judgment will be pronounced upon all the wise men who always prophesied evil and were always right.

Do you see a workman coming with a plank on his shoulder and a spade in his hand to the scene of a recent fire? What is he doing? He is not thinking, is not suffering; he is only beginning to work, to clear up, to build up again. Do you know who this workman is? Suppose he were a brother of that divine wizard who had to use an ear-trumpet to hear whether the piano was in tune with the world-harmonies with which his soul was filled—he

who, for all his poverty, could afford to fling the Ninth Symphony out over the world.

Is there no consolation for you in all this?

Harold lay still, his eyes closed and his hands clasped beneath his head, his breathing slow and deep, while great billows of gladness rolled over him under Sister Alma's gentle hands; and at last he turned and hid his face in the pillow, his shoulders heaving with his sobs.

THE END

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Feb 2
Apr.



